



Skylark

Winter 2001





Copyright © 2001 by *SKYLARK*

This magazine publishes work by children and by adults on the acknowledged premise that children and more mature literary artists should be published side by side.

All rights in this book are reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner without the written permission of the author or artist except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

Correspondence may be sent to the address below.

*SKYLARK*  
Purdue University Calumet  
2200 169th St.  
Hammond, Indiana 46323-2094

Purdue Calumet is an equal access / equal opportunity University.

Printed by Largus Printing, Munster, Indiana

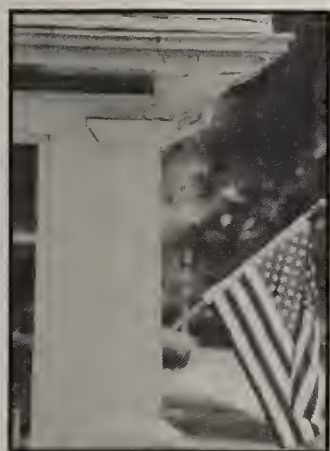
The watercolor with acrylic collage components on the front cover was done by Jack Rickard, Phoenix, Arizona, who describes this work as follows:

It is of an old house in Jerome, Arizona, once one of the largest mining towns in the West, today a ghost town clinging to the precarious slope of Mingus Mountain. First mined by the Tuzigoot Indians in 935 for the blue azurite for body, garment and pottery decorations, it became famous for Phelps-Dodge copper mining in the late 1800's until closing in 1950. Since a huge dynamite blast in 1925, the town has been gradually slipping downhill, remains of some buildings having moved many feet from their original locations. It is now a shadow of its grandiose past.



# FEATURES FOR

## WINTER 2001



### Lost

a poem written by Chloe Zimmerman,  
age 14, on September 11, 2001

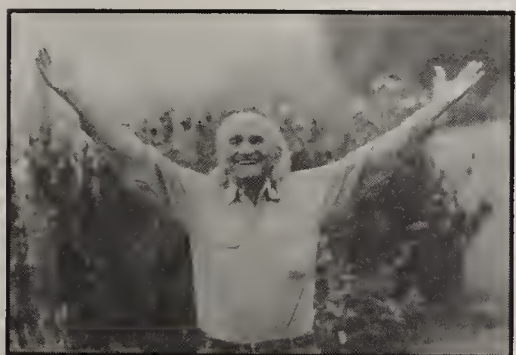
4



### Education

this special section offers an interview  
with June Wolfram Master concerning  
the one-room schoolhouse she attended  
almost eighty years ago. Also,  
Dr. Martyna Bellessis explains how to  
teach art at the elementary level

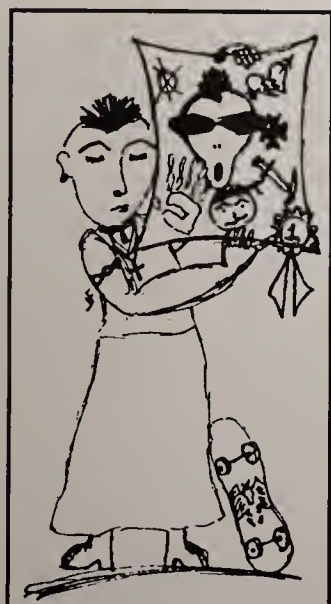
5



### Poetry and Prose

this section is underpinned with an  
essay by Dovid Katz about his father,  
Menke; an essay by Bob Vance about  
"surrealist" poetry and his poem on  
Lorca; and an essay by Martin  
Wasserman on the poetry of Rudolph  
Fuchs, supplemented by two poems  
translated from the German

33



### Young Writers

a first in *Skylark*, a selection of six  
essays have been chosen from thirty-one  
submitted by students attending school  
in Goshen, Kentucky, along with two  
color photos of all the submitters

83

### Index

104

## Education Editor

Pamela Hunter

## Faculty Advisor

Charles B. Tinkham

# SKYLARK STAFF



## Poetry Editor

Cathy Michniewicz

## Prose Readers

Albert Matulewicz,  
Cynequa Sain

## Young Writers Editor

Shirley Jo Moritz

## Readers

Richard Bacevicius, Virginia Deweese,  
Albert Matulewicz, Chris Mauch,  
Cathy Michniewicz, Shirley Jo Moritz,  
Laura Ruben, Cynequa Sain,  
Henry White, Patricia Wilson



Having finished this 30th edition of *Skylark* as editor in chief, I feel that the last ten issues my staff and I have created have been nuggets of amber—each year's magazine capturing fragments of poetry, prose and artwork reflecting the uniqueness of individual creators for the benefit of an eclectic audience of readers. During my tenure, the philosophy of this magazine has been to allow *Skylark* to evolve, through a natural process of diverse ideas and talents, into a cohesive verbal and visual jewel.

Many people have helped me realize this goal. Especially supportive have been *Skylark* staff members and our faculty advisor, Charles B. Tinkham, all of whom have volunteered so much time and who have given me such positive input into a task of intangible rewards. For instance, Shirley Jo Moritz has always kept me on track, quietly reminding me of deadlines and just daring me with one of her no-nonsense looks to fly off into hysterics. Equally helpful, Cathy Michniewicz has trivialized my bouts of self-doubt with her genuine enthusiasm and excitement. I have also appreciated all of the donors, patrons, and contributors who have remained faithful year after year. And, of course, the whole crew at Largus Printing has always deserved at least ten weeks in the Bahamas after producing every edition. The latest magazine has consistently appeared even more stunning than those before it.

I would especially like to dedicate the special section, "Education," to Dr. Erna Yackel, Professor of Mathematics Education. She knows I have no special love for mathematics, yet she takes the time to give me valuable advice and support—in spite of my feelings about her discipline!

—Pamela Hunter



I would like to thank the staff and the writers of *Skylark* for their excellence. It has been an honor and a privilege to work with all of you these past four years and I would like to express my gratitude. The writers' submissions have not only enriched my life but have inspired me toward the development of my own writing skills. I'm also grateful for the writers' cooperation in giving both their time and effort to make the *Skylark* a success. I'm thankful for the many friendships I've gained—my life has been blessed and enriched by the writers' talent and love of poetry. I would especially like to thank Professor Charles Tinkham for his encouragement throughout this experience. He is my mentor, my teacher and my friend. Also, our chief editor, Pamela Hunter, has risen above many obstacles in the past four years, showing determination in carrying out the goals of *Skylark*. Her determination gave me the strength to do what I thought I could never do. Her guidance and patience gave me the faith to believe in my own skills. Our friendship will continue beyond the pages of this magazine.

My greatest reward, the only reward I would ever need, has been the experience of working with all of you. Thank you.

— Cathy Michniewicz



In this final issue of my editorship of the Young Writers section of *Skylark*, I call your attention to the special teachers and students who have greatly aided in the promotion of our magazine. The sharing of talents, adhering to deadlines, and being patient as I learned to edit submissions have not only benefited me and the local community, but a larger society as well. Throughout my seven years of editorship, I have accepted creative essays and poetry from as far away as Canada, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

Locally, Cheryl Chapman (from Frances Xavier Warde School, First Church of the Brethren, and Ardmore School, all in the Chicago area), Kristin Duncanson (from James Whitcomb Riley Elementary in Hammond, Indiana), and Mike Hurley (from Wheeling High School in Wheeling, Illinois) are teachers who sent *Skylark* submissions of their students year after year. I also appreciated receiving artwork from Amanda Diehl and Joshua Diehl, Erika Fink and Jackie Fink, Brian Hunter, and Christopher Silverman. Each of these young people submitted art on his or her own.

In addition, the art teacher whom I am most indebted to is Dr. Martyna Bellessis. Annually, she sent *Skylark* artwork by her students from University Elementary in Bloomington, Indiana. In fact, in the Winter 1999 issue of our magazine, Isaiah Stroup, from her sixth grade class, opened my section with his "Pink Flamingo." Consequently, one of the editors of *Children's Writer's and Illustrator's Market* selected it to appear in that guide. Besides having his work published there, Stroup received a monetary award from this market guide.

Every year I received valuable input from my reading team as they evaluated submissions. I thank Virginia Deweese, Chris Mauch, Kathleen Natiello, Cynequa Sain, and Patricia Wilson for making my hard decisions come easier.

And *Skylark's* Editor-in-Chief, Pamela Hunter, was very instrumental in my growth as an editor. She guided me with her thoughtful caring through each issue of which I was section editor. I am also grateful for learning from such a knowledgeable, patient person who saw my potential when I didn't.

To all of the above persons, my sincere thanks for their energetic efforts, patience, and their ability to help create a magazine that has served so many people. Because of them, my editorial rewards have been many.

— Shirley Jo Moritz

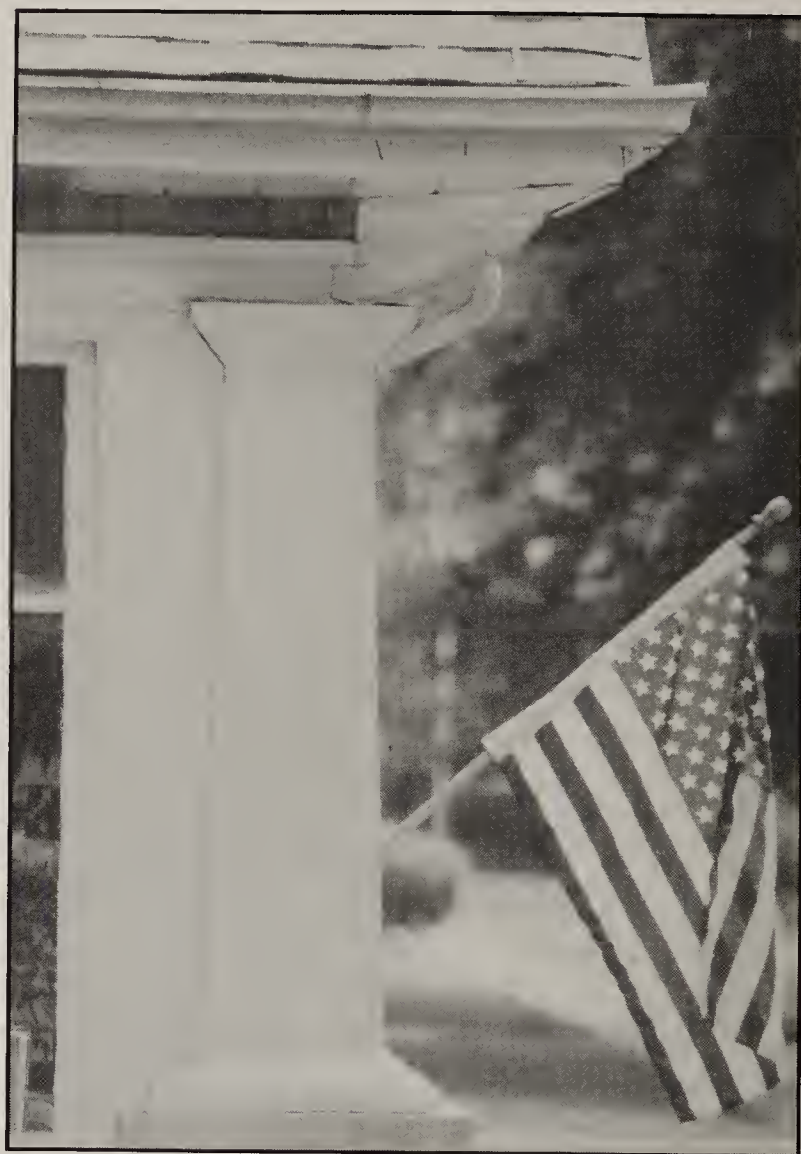




# LOST

A warm blanket, a crackling fire,  
Yearning for a feeling lost;  
Safety, comfort,  
Slightly out of reach;  
Just beyond my grasp,  
Gone from me so fast.

Etched in my memory are  
Two pillars tumbling down.  
Following, my heart falls,  
Will it rise once more?  
Why has fire taken on a new meaning?  
Once warm and cheerful,  
Now threatening,  
Billowing from fresh wounds,  
A strength proved painfully vulnerable.



*Photograph taken by Brian Hunter in summer, 2001.*

Beauty is destroyed by greed.  
Where will greed take us,  
When nothing beautiful is left to desire?  
Why turn flowers into dust?  
Lives so delicate  
Gone  
Like faith  
Without reason or justification.  
  
Why has safety been stripped from my soul?



# *E d u c a t i o n*

*Pamela Hunter, Editor*



# Education

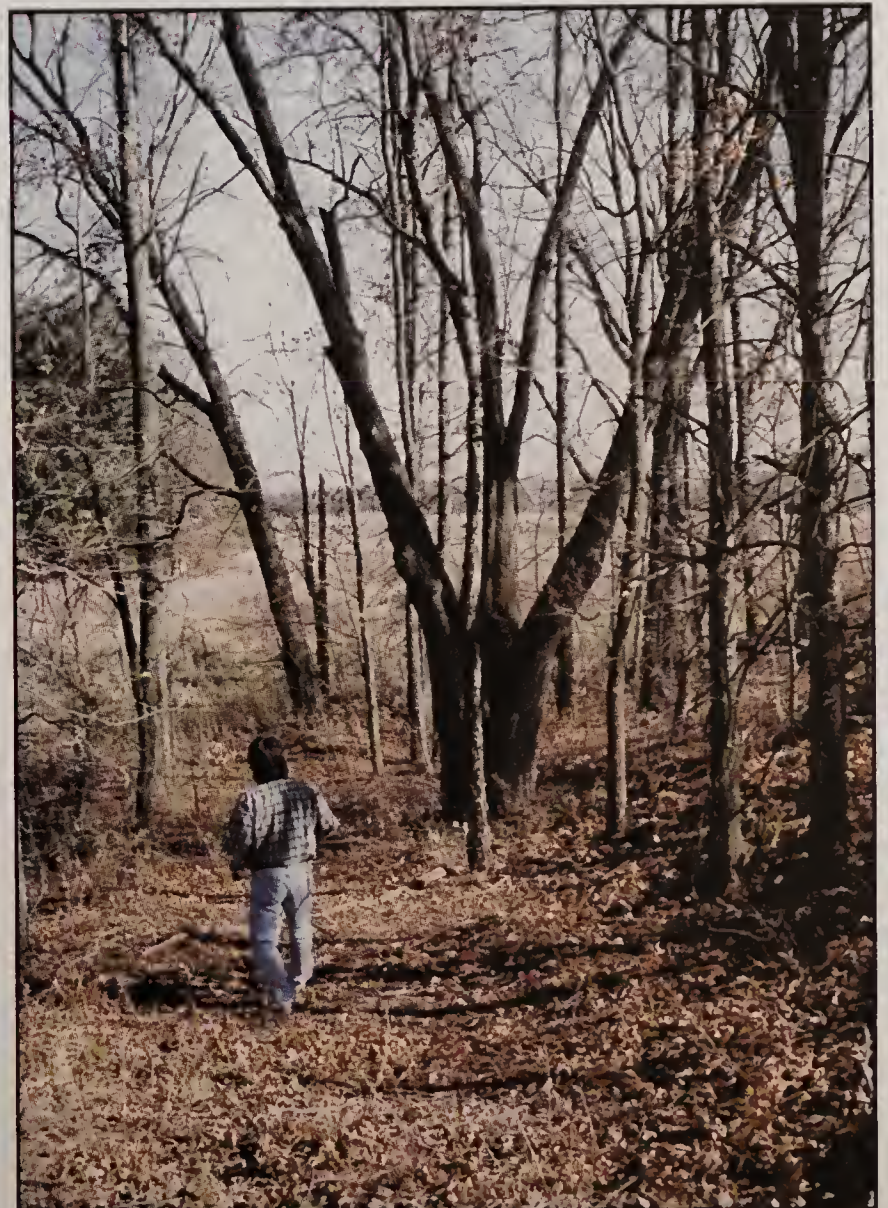
Pamela Hunter, Editor





Today, school windows  
summon sun and wind;  
offer freeze-frame  
memories of  
wood-burning  
warmth and  
rousing recitations

Michael Greenwich retraces  
the country road  
June Wolfram  
took nearly  
eighty years ago  
to attend  
District #4 School  
(Horner)



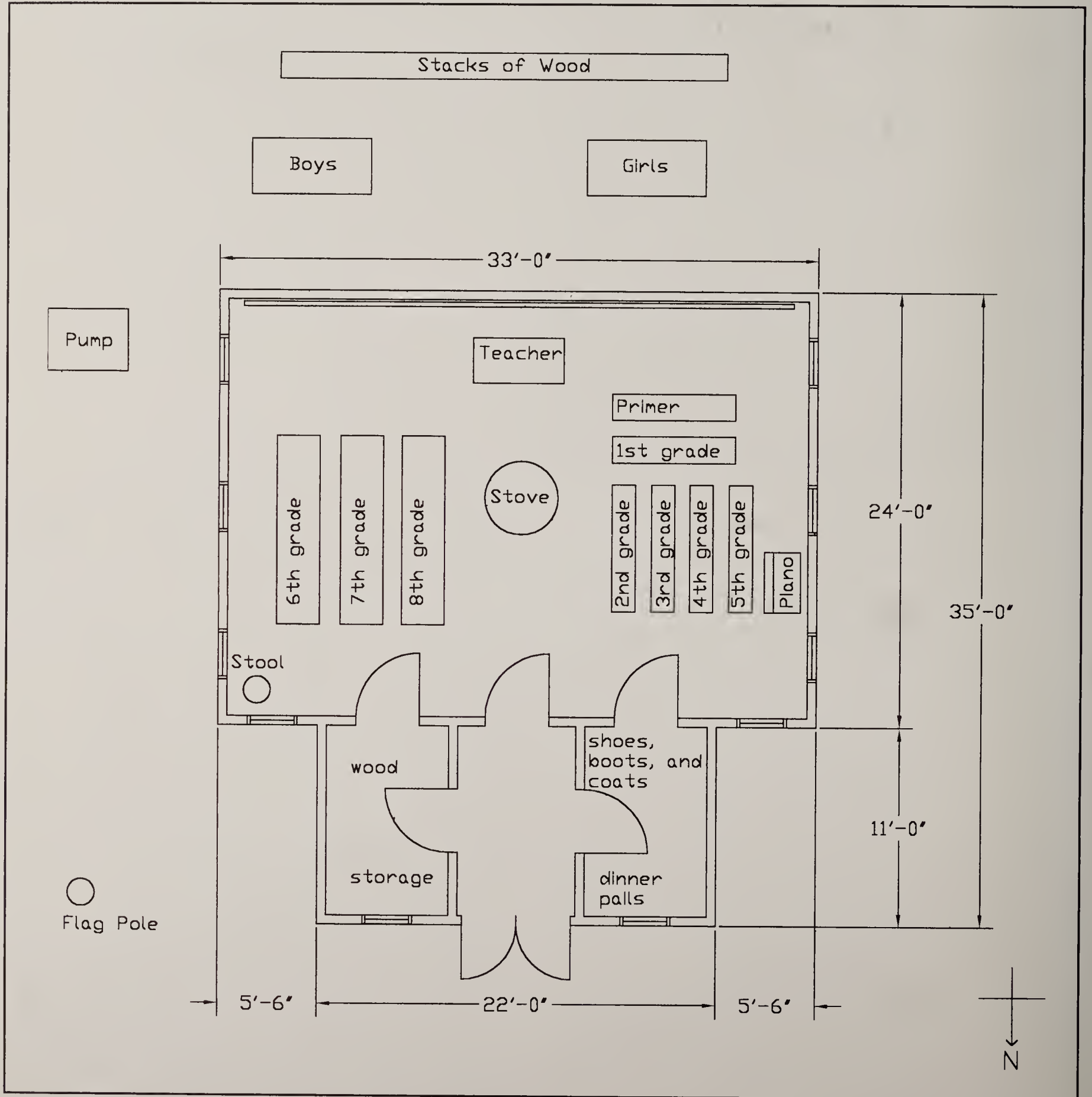




# HORNER SCHOOL

Circa 1924

CAD drawing rendered by David McLees and Brian Hunter from the recollections of June Wolfram Master—2001.



Entrance of Horner School faces north towards County Road 750 S. County Road 1100 E. parallels the west side of the building. Inside, a slate blackboard covers the length of the south wall.



## MICHAEL'S SCHOOL — HORNER STILL AT THE CORNER

by Pamela Hunter

*I wish to thank Lois Varro and Jim Shilling from the Starke County Historical Society Museum in Knox for allowing Michael Greenwich and me the freedom to consult old township school records and Starke County maps as we researched Horner School. Similarly, we both appreciated the friendly and unobtrusive assistance of the librarians at the Henry F. Schricker Starke County Public Library, also in Knox. These ladies exemplify the best in community stewardship.*

—Pamela Hunter

The Leopolds donated the land for the school—owned the farm it sits on. They were Aunt Haldy and Uncle Harry to all the neighborhood kids. The cookie jar was always full,” recalls June Wolfram Master, one of those neighborhood kids who attended Horner School from 1924 to 1928. Though still standing today, this symbol of early 20th century rural education hasn’t matured as well as June. Still, its traditional design is enlivened with fine brickwork over its paneless windows and weathered front doors. And, happily, according to its owner, Michael Greenwich, the building will be transformed into a viable structure once more.

A lofty plan of renovating a one-room schoolhouse wasn’t the original reason for Michael purchasing property in Starke County. He had always wanted to live on a farm. A professor of statistics and mathematics at Purdue University Calumet, he first looked at land in Lake, Porter, and La Porte counties. For the amount of acres he wanted, everything was too high. He had no luck in Newton or Jasper, either. Finally, he discovered this quarter section of land just north of Monterey in 1994. And, he has been commuting back and forth ever since.

When I first drove out to his farm last April, I envisioned him sharing county space with fields of cow clusters and car clutter. What I found was a landscape of tilled soil, marshes alive with frog talk, and farm buildings airing out in the spring sun. After taking photos of the schoolhouse, I followed him into town. His guidance was invaluable because only county roads lead into Monterey and I have never figured out why, for instance, when traveling on 1100 E, I am either heading north or south. Do I need a PhD in geology?

Established near the Tippecanoe River, Monterey originally served as an outpost for the area’s hunting and trapping activities. It is located just over the border in Pulaski County. By 1890, the Erie Railroad was transporting the products of area farmers who had replaced the trappers. When passenger trains connected the town with Lima (Ohio), Fort Wayne, and Chicago, Monterey attracted residents who worked outside the county. As a present-day commuter (via jeep), Michael defines Monterey as “a quiet, small town where pride of community and peace prevail among its residents.”

The character of its main street reinforces this opinion. The eclectic look and age of the commercial buildings and residences speak

of self-contained content. Activity is low-key but pervasive. Especially impressive is the town’s recently restored Carnegie Library. With its light-brick facade and prairie-style windows, the building reflects the patrons it serves. Both are substantial, dignified, efficient. I asked Michael what the general attitude was towards retaining old structures. He replied, “In some parts of the community, there is interest in the history of the town and in preserving the past.” Then, he pointed out, “Many other people have no interest about the past at all because they are too busy just trying to pay their bills.” I asked him what he thought of historic preservation. When he said, “You can not go back. Keeping the past with modern amenities seems to be the only reasonable way to keep it intact,” I wondered about his plans for renovating his schoolhouse.

\* \* \*

If his students knew how thoroughly their professor had done his Horner homework, they just might take studying for his final exams more seriously. From plat books, maps at the Starke County Historical Society Museum and from sources at several libraries, Michael secured valuable information. Also, from the Starke County Abstract Company in Knox, he was given the following facts. Merrit and Matilda Horner bought 20 acres that made up part of the northwest corner of his property in 1874. In 1885, the first township school (Parker) was closed. District 1 and District 4 replaced it. Each of these new schools was named for the patrons who donated the land: the first was called Schmidt School and the second one Horner.

The current brick District 4 was erected in 1903 by J.D. Cobler and Sons. At the time, W. Kaley was trustee. Before Horner was closed in 1929, numerous acres in the whole section changed hands. By 1913, Harry Leopold (remembered as Uncle Harry and his wife as Aunt Haldy by June Master) owned the area that included the school. Finally, in 1949, the land was deeded back to Leopold from the Township.

While Michael traced the “bloodline” of District 4, I consulted reference material on rural education in America. In one source, the author stated that many schools in Indiana, unlike those in surrounding Midwestern states, were made of brick instead of wood. Why this was true puzzled us. But, our conjectures were put to rest



when I purchased a stack of old *Outdoor Indiana* magazines at Uncle John's flea market. In his article, "A Structure For Education," (February, 1989), Paul Diebold wrote:

**Brick structures were durable, easy to maintain, and in Indiana clay could often be mined and fired on the site, reducing transportation costs.**

I also confirmed that District 4, with its total classroom size of 24' x 33', was built within the standard range recommended for effective hearing and seeing.

After we shared our individual research efforts, Michael and I discussed the future of Horner School. I asked him if he had heard from the Department of Natural Resources of the State of Indiana. He said he had. Then, he filled me in about the details. With the paperwork he received from this agency, he can request that District 4 be listed in the National Historic Registry. If it is, part of the renovation cost would be available for federal and state tax credits. And, once the renovation is completed, a property tax exemption may also be applicable. According to Michael, there are two stipulations, however, that must be met in order to receive these benefits. First, the renovation must retain the historical integrity of the building's original exterior. Inside, the structure can be completely modernized.



Photograph of Horner School's entrance (upper right) and its west side taken in 2001.

Secondly, the building must be restored so that it will generate revenue. After much thought, he has decided to convert Horner into a studio apartment with kitchen, bath, and bedroom loft.

Hearing this, I ask, "With its thirteen-foot ceiling, would the classroom be able to accommodate a loft?"

"Yes, and I was thinking I would build the stairway and balcony rail out of rustic wood."

"Oh, yeah, like the interiors of those cabins in the Adirondacks!" I add. Then, I couldn't help throwing in my own *personal* preference. "Hey, you know what would really be neat? Instead of an apartment, you could make the school house into an antique shop."

Michael analyzed my suggestion only as a true professor of statistics and mathematics could—with cold deliberation. And when he answered with, "How would anybody know an antique shop was there?", I remain silent. But, being a true believer in the value of history and nostalgia, I know that, in all probability, I will eventually come up with a reasonable, if impassioned, rebuttal.

*Note: Along with his plans for Horner School, Michael Greenwich is cataloguing school sites at the request of Sandra Bubliss of the Starke County Tourism Commission. To date, he has determined that there were sixty-five sites in the nine townships of Starke County.*





## DUCK ON A ROCK AND OTHER RECOLLECTIONS OF JUNE WOLFRAM MASTER

by Pamela Hunter

**W**ith Thanksgiving approaching, an appreciation of sounds and sights soon to be stored away for several months overwhelms me. Now, hearing rain on the roof or the infrequent rumble of thunder tells me that I can probably wait until spring to replace my ripped umbrella. Also, on my way home from work now, I applaud all of those defiant maple leaves still cluttering up the sky. A waver of illumination, they lessen the effect of November's moody dusk. I relish the delay of raking them.

Still, as Mike Greenwich and I recently walked along a country road in Starke County, the emerging leafless landscape provided us with pleasurable rediscoveries, too. Here, the interdependence of hollow and hill revealed itself once more. The thrust of a lone brick silo and the earthbound slope of a farmhouse porch were visible again in an aquatint of autumn harmony.

Small wonder June Wolfram Master chose this same road to take to Horner School every day. No matter what the season. Because, even though that was near eighty years ago, this route pleased her so much that she never used another one unless the snow was too deep.

\* \* \*

In 1924, June started primer before age five. Today, with her clear blue eyes focused on the past, she recalls that she liked everything about school. Going there from September until at least the first of April, "Got me away from home and the farm chores," she admits.

Each weekday morning she dressed eagerly. In warmer weather, there was a choice between two dresses sewn from feed sacks. Winter wear included cut-down coats, long black stockings, knee boots, and knitted tousle caps. Once dressed, she put the cows out to graze, and then she headed for the schoolhouse where she had the "opportunity to learn."

Traditionally, the opportunity to learn in rural Indiana was structured around the township school before 1900 and around the consolidated school after that. In fact, according to Wayne Fuller in *The Old Country School*, by 1903 two-thirds of the schools in the state were consolidated. Fuller also points out that four years later Indiana mandated township trustees to close schools with twelve students or less. A township school, Horner served its community until 1929.

June remembers that the North Bend Trustee took care of everything. For example, he hired all of the teachers. Concerning June, this meant that Hazel Good was her teacher for second through fourth grades. However, William Keitzer, who taught her in primer and first grade, was her favorite. Eventually, Keitzer quit teaching and bought a lumberyard in Monterey. The township trustee also chose textbooks to be used. Once the selection was made, students had to pay for them. Because of the cost, classmates always shared

their books, and families kept them year after year. June recalls that one speller served five Wolfram siblings.

The trustee also took care of the teachers' salaries, paid for the construction and upgrading of buildings, including privies, and purchased supplies. In a fragile copy of the Starke County Democrat dated August 18, 1898, the annual budget of North Bend Trustee, Michael Kelley, is published. Among other expenditures, this statement lists costs for all of the schools. During September of 1897, Kelley spent \$21.00 on temperance charts and during December he bought one globe and more charts for \$47.65. When June attended Horner, students no longer wrote on individual slates. But, she says since "both paper and pencils were hard to come by, we did most of our work orally or on the black board." Also, she recalls that everyone reading out loud was expected to do so "with expression."

Securing fuel to keep Hoosier school children warm during cold winter months has always been a yearly concern, too. Over the years, the only variables to this procurement have been the type of fuel consumed and its costs. To heat the schools in his township, Kelley paid out a total of \$98.99 for wood. In the 1920s, Horner school still had a wood-burning stove. This "Round Oak" stood in the center of the room. If the temperature was *very* cold, June says, the students were given permission to *scoot* their chairs a little closer to the heat. In addition, the Round Oak provided heat for an occasional taffy pull. This occurred, however, only when all eight grades received 100% on a spelling test.



June Wolfram and Pearl Wagner:  
1st grade at Horner.

Every morning, June and her classmates had a job to do. Each carried an armful of wood into the room that is located left of the entryway. Opposite that room was the one in which outerwear and lunch pails were stored. June still has hers. Measuring 6" in diameter, the metal is discolored but dentless—a condition to make collectors of primitives drool. Here is a container epitomizing durable, if



Spring 1936: Graduation Day from Monterey High School for June, here with future husband, Karl Master.



unadorned, country construction. And, the food that once filled it speaks of country self-sufficiency.

Daily, June either ate a buttered, fried egg sandwich (from the family's milking cows and laying hens) or one made of sorghum. For the latter, the Wolframs literally raised their own cane and took it to the mill in the fall. By sealing it in glass jars, the sorghum kept all year. Popcorn and cookies were special treats. But, apples were staples, even though they were too big for the lunch pail.

No beverages were brought from home. In the classroom, a water bucket was kept filled by the eighth-grade boys. With pride, June explains the procedure for getting a drink:

**Yes, we all drank from the same cup and, no, we didn't lose any students from germs being passed. There were no vaccinations and we were told if we got the measles, mumps, etc, when we were young, we would have a milder case, if we got them later in life.**

Of course, studying hard and doing the best in every subject was expected. Rosamond Wolfram, an older sister of June, took four grades in two years. She graduated from the eighth-grade class of North Bend Township School (Horner was closed by then) at the age of 10. Recess, lasting only about 15 minutes, was just long enough for students to use the privies or stretch legs. According to June, playtime had to be earned. If everyone had their lessons completed, the teacher sometimes gave them a half-hour break.

Indoor activities involved guessing games, action games, such as Musical Chairs, and singing games. Outside, the children played Stoop Tag, Steal Base, Hey, Rover, or Duck on the Rock. This last game probably should have been played in an area with a gravel pit near by, rather than in North Bend Township where there were fields of cultivated mint and marshes of wild huckleberries. That's because the rules for playing Duck on the Rock require a variety of, well—rocks! The duck is a smallish specimen that must be knocked off a larger rock. And, of course, the missile itself is a rock. June emphasizes that “*your stone* was very personal, like your marble SHOOT-ER. Sometimes, it took weeks to find just the right size and one that was round as a ball. Then, you painted your name, or “??,” on it.”

Learning to work in groups or being a part of a team is an educational strategy prevalent today. Words such as brainstorming, consensus, and groupthink are familiar to us all. However, helping one another or making decisions in a democratic manner didn't have to be taught at Horner. Such acts came naturally. For instance, if some students finished their lessons early, they worked with those who were still struggling. Also, good students such as June graded papers for Miss Good. Finally, at day's end, primers and first-graders were helped with coats and shoelaces. Similarly, group agreement was evident when Horner students voted for what objects would be drawn in art or for what illustrations would be decorating the walls throughout the school year.

\* \* \*





Before Michael Greenwich and I retraced the road that June had taken to Horner School all those years ago, we met with her at Sportsman's Bar and Grill in downtown Monterey. He and I had just ordered lunch but she only wanted a cup of coffee. Now, we were listening as she explained how she and her husband recently sold their winter home in Arizona.

"Karl said it was just too hard to keep up two houses."

Sighing, she shrugs slightly as two deer hunters come in. They settle down at the wobbly table we had originally chosen before relocating.


Watching one pull out cigarettes and the other pocket a ring of keys, she continues. "Since I had to choose, I decided to keep the home here where I grew up."

"It's amazing how you remember everything so clearly," I say.

She smiles. Then, seeing that the two hunters are struggling with their table, her smile includes them as she calls over some advice. "You need to wad something up and stick it right about *there*."

We all laugh. Turning back to us, June replies. "Yeah, I can recall things that happened a long time ago. But, I can't remember what I had for breakfast this morning."

As our waitress serves us, she continues. "Boy, I'm sure going to miss playing senior softball in Arizona." Then, as if to put her short-term memory loss into perspective, she adds, "I just remembered something that happened at the regional games. I thought I recognized a woman on another team. But, that team wasn't from Arizona. I kept trying to figure out why her face seemed so familiar to me."

Michael and I attack our hamburgers. Then, we lean across our sturdy table in order to catch the connection. 

## Creed

I believe in being the first to say hello  
and I believe in asking for names.

I believe in names and their meanings, I believe  
my name means protector of the sea  
for a reason.

I believe music and scent  
make me recall those I'd almost forgotten.

I believe in forgetting  
and in the soft sighing of memory. I believe  
my actions return to me threefold,

fivefold, twentyfold  
and someday the ones I've hurt  
and saved

will all come back to me.

I believe in returning borrowed things,  
sometimes. I believe in sometimes, I believe  
the only constancy is change and I believe in change.

I believe a conversation over coffee  
with a friend is all I ever need, I believe  
we all need more than we'd like to admit  
and everyone needs to hear  
someone loves them.

I believe there is power everywhere  
and I believe it's in crying  
and laughter and the rush

I feel after I run.

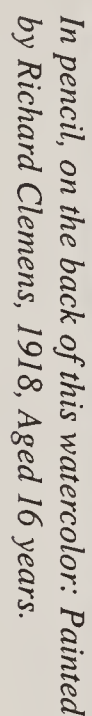
I believe strength is the only power I want,  
and I believe I have found it.

— Meredith Kaffel  
Short Hills, New Jersey

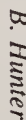


Thanks to fast film, a camera catches a clear image of June & Michael, pausing before they tackle new tasks.





by Alice Williams Brotherton



And mind you of yon rustling grove,  
The little stream beside,  
Where violets grew so darkly blue;  
And the meadow green and wide,

How often down yon meadow-path  
Lingering we strayed, we two,  
Your eyes upon the clover bent,  
My glances fixed on you;  
While down the field the west wind  
brought  
Our playmates' merry shouts—  
In the days when you wore pinafores,  
And I wore roundabouts!

12

## *Black Landscape.*

*Hold a card or piece of card-board over the smoke of a candle until it is entirely and evenly blackened, then, with the point of a penknife, scratch upon it a landscape or any other picture that you may prefer. Moonlight scenes may be made especially pretty in this way, and with a little experience and artistic taste any ingenious boy or girl can become really skillful in bringing out the startling contrasts of light and shade that these curious sketches may be made to produce.*

*From: "Golden Hours for Boys and Girls," November, 1880*

## AFTER CHRISTMAS BREAK

*("First Day" Jitters)*

*by Mary Irene Hogan*

**I**n January 3, 2000, Sara Rich arrived at her eighth-grade English class reluctantly. This was the first day of the new semester. She knew that the class would be studying nineteenth-century American poets the whole week because Ms. Corey had announced that in December.

English was Sara's favorite subject at Southeast Junior High in northwestern Vermont, a poor suburb of Westerntown, a sprawling city. She had always received A's in English but, for this area of literature, she felt unprepared. She did not like poetry. So, as she found her seat, she already knew that she probably would not participate in the discussions.

When Ms. Corey started class, however, Sara changed her mind. She decided that, given an opportunity, she would recite a poem she had found in one of her older sister's books of poetry. Her choice would be a poem by Emily Dickinson, one of the nineteenth-century American poets whom Ms. Corey might want the class to study.

As soon as the kids quieted down, Ms. Corey asked, "Does anyone know any nineteenth-century American poets?"

"Virginia Wolfe!" yelled Tom Brickman, sitting in the back of the class.

"You dummy! She's British!" shouted

Sara, making a bubble with her gum.

"Settle down!" Ms. Corey warned. "Virginia Wolfe is not only British but she's considered a twentieth-century writer. Sara, do you know any?"

"Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman," Sara replied, crossing her legs and fidgeting with her ponytail.

"Good," Ms. Corey said. "We will focus on Emily Dickinson today. Does anyone know any Emily Dickinson poems?"

Nonchalantly bending to tie her shoelace, Sara blurted out,

*An Hour is a Sea  
Between a Few, and me—  
With them would harbor be—*

Ms. Corey grumped, "That is not one of her poems."

"Yes, it is," Sara maintained, looking right at Ms. Corey.

"May I see you, Sara Rich, in the hall, now?" scolded Ms. Corey.

Suddenly, Sara was sorry she had participated in the discussion. Her hands were sweating. She swallowed her bubble gum. In a small voice, she replied, "Yes, Ms. Corey," and followed her teacher out of the room.

"Would you please not make me look unprepared? I do not know that poem! Where did you find it?" Ms. Corey said, all in one breath.

"I *am* sorry, Ms. Corey," Sara answered, hanging her head. "I acted like a smart-aleck because I don't understand poetry very well and I didn't want any one to find out."

"So, you decided to take the offensive?"

"Yes. But, it *is* a poem by Emily Dickinson. A forgotten poem. I found it in *The Essential Dickinson*, Volume 23, selected by Joyce Carol Oates." By now Sara was crying.

"Don't cry, Sara. I'm glad that you took the initiative to read some nineteenth-century poems before we got back from Christmas break. That shows that you are willing to learn more about something you are unfamiliar with. All is forgiven."

"Thank you, Ms. Corey. I didn't realize how rude I was to you."

"Well, why don't we go back into class, and you can tell everyone what you think about this forgotten poem."

*Mary Irene Hogan lives  
in Hammond, Indiana.*





## A,B,C's for Little Brothers

A is for annoys me.  
B is for best friends.  
C is for cares for you.  
D is for demands attention.  
E is for ear-itates me (get it?).  
F is for frolics around the house.  
G is for great at sports.  
H is for hugs his stuffed animals.  
I is for I love you.  
J is for jumps on the bed.  
K is for kids to see.  
L is for loves you back.  
M is for makes a racket.

N is for not hungry for spinach.  
O is for Ooops! I spilled my milk!  
P is for pretends to cry.  
Q is for quiet little brother.  
R is for rocket man when he grows up.  
S is for still in diapers.  
T is for trusts me.  
U is for united brother and sister.  
V is for values respect.  
W is for his Walter the Walrus.  
X is for Xylophone on the crib.  
Y is for young—it's great to be!  
Z is for zaps back to babyland!

— Erin Splan, Grade 3  
Ardmore School  
Villa Park, Illinois

## Help Me, Help Me

I believe  
Someone knocking on my door,  
Saying, "Help me, help me."  
I ask my teacher,  
"What can that be?"  
I realize my teacher's  
Telling me to read  
Every night  
And I told my mama  
There was someone in my room,  
Saying, "Help me, help me."  
I asked my mama,  
She said it was the book  
And the book called out to me,  
"You know me?  
I'm the prettiest, strongest,  
Most educated Black woman around,  
Help me, help me."  
I went up to my school  
And I told my teacher  
There was someone up in my book  
In my closet, saying, "Help me, help me."  
And she said, "Darlin',  
This is the book of your life—  
You are what you read—  
Learn to read it!  
Learn to read your life!"  
And I believed I could read  
And achieve it—  
My life.

## Teacher's Pet

Little kids who like attention  
Always looking to out-do us.  
Over-achievers  
Raising their hands every second  
Thinking that they are the best  
Disagreeing with their classmates  
Always taking the balls—  
Yard apes, they're called.  
They always, always, always  
Complain, complain, complain.  
Always they want to read stuff  
To the class.  
Always they use their rulers  
To make their lines,  
Perfect hand-raising straight and tall  
No leaning on their chairs  
So they don't get in trouble.  
Always they blame things  
On everyone but themselves.  
Oh—but wait!  
I raise my hand every second and  
I like to read stuff to the class and  
What if I am teacher's pet?

— Erin Splan, Grade 3  
Ardmore School  
Villa Park, Illinois

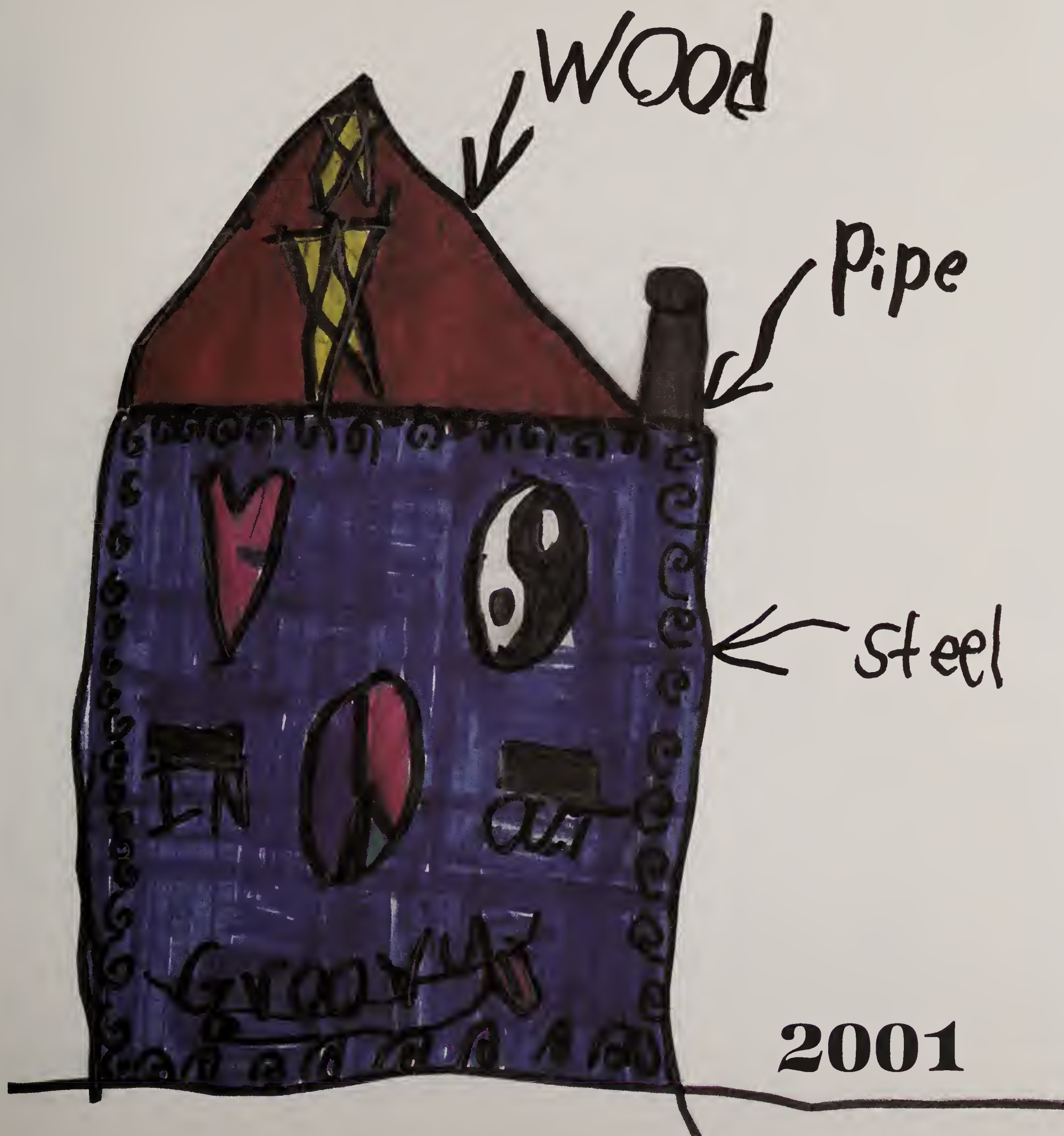
## Teacher

My teacher say  
Do your work  
And I did.  
And we all went to gym  
And library and spelling  
And we went to computer lab  
And I say, "Hooray!"  
I looked at the clock  
I saw it was 2:00,  
Time to go hide and try my plan.  
And I went to the washroom.  
Miss Nice Lady Teacher say,  
"Come out of the washroom! Now!"  
"Miss Nice Lady," I say,  
"I want to hide in here now  
And I want to stay in school all night.  
I want to be the teacher.  
Pleeease! All night long!  
I want to teach science  
And social studies and, and, and...."  
"Pleeease, Phyllicia!  
Please come out of the washroom! Now!  
It would be scary in there at night,  
And if you want to be the teacher,  
I'll let you, tomorrow!"  
And she did, and I did,  
And I'm going to be Miss Nice Lady Teacher  
When I grow up, too.

— Phyllicia Williams, Grade 3  
Leif Ericson School  
Chicago, Illinois

— Britney Walker, Grade 6  
Leif Ericson School  
Chicago, Illinois

# Homework Machine





## SOMEDAY I'LL RETIRE FROM TEACHING

I'll look back on these days in the classroom  
as works of careless art,  
each shape and color hurled  
as if an electric fan collided with a palette.

Today, classes over  
and a mound of papers to grade,  
I know that students' minds are collages  
of loud music, dirt, and cinematic clips—  
that most of what I hurl  
doesn't stick at all. But later I'll forget.

I'll forget  
that what's auctioned out to progress,  
like stepping stones,  
sinks or cracks,  
assumes strange shapes  
and often dissipates  
till even its adamant form is gone.

Now, when winter seems as much within  
as without, I take comfort in Polonius,  
doddering with more art than matter.  
Yet he phrased truths  
in words that dullest students  
recall long after.

Works of art:  
I'll remember my lessons that way.  
I'll have faith in their permanence  
while I'm losing mine.  
I'll forget the flawed cynic I was  
in my academic robe and cap  
as I luxuriate in a Florida sun.

Unlike the Creator who conjured  
a world out of light,  
I'll enlighten the past,  
scumbling pearlized overlays  
where harsh realities obtrude:  
works of art—  
as if Monet painted them  
with Blake's faith that imagination  
creates images of truth—  
as if memory's images  
are themselves a revelation  
and what we create  
is something different  
from what we teach:  
a life of the mind,  
real in itself,  
and worthy of being called good.

— Jane McClellan, Ocala, Florida



## NO UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCES

by Timothy Agnew

**I**t has become a benign ritual sitting here at dusk, swatting mosquitoes and percolating past shadows through our thoughts. I imagine we do it to excavate our lost senses, keeping us vital in this passage of age we enter. Wilfred's hat hides his drowsy eyes as he swings on the porch swing. He's tired but he won't admit it. He's been in the habit of playing Scrabble with Roy Kelly till late in the morning hours, always working to build his already abundant vocabulary. I tell him we're both in our 70's and words won't stick anyway. He sighs and drops his chin, peering at me through the reflection in his glasses.

"AMBULATE," he says.

"I prefer to use 'walk' instead."

"Interpolate."

"I wish to *interpolate* the notion that you, with much affectation, are engaged in a foolish discourse you cannot win."

"That has verisimilitude."

"Verily."

The sun began its drop behind the trees, and we sat in a silence that two people share who have known each other all their lives. There are no uncomfortable silences, just a respect that is warranted by time, like two brothers aging across decades of life. It was time for what Wilfred likes to call the *Raconteur* hour of our evening, and like clockwork he'll start up. Watch.

"Elliot, do you recall the whispering pines?" he says.

Of course I remembered.

"The Smoky Mountains, winter of '34," he continues.

I stare at him, at those little gray eyes I've known most of my 74 years, like I've forgotten the entire thing. It really irks him to no end. "Tell me how old we were again so I can do the math."

"You were *twelve*. In chronological dog years, seven years older than me."

We were both in Boy Scouts then, long before the war stole our innocence. We had a good troop here in the Carolinas, and leaders

that used the weekend camps as subterfuge from their domestic lives so they could show us how to cook stew in tin foil and carve sticks.

It was a weekend camping trip in the Smoky Mountains. It was winter, and a thick powdery snow hugged the ground. The trees were a white velvet; the branches looked like thin pins holding a foot of white snow against the blue sky. On the way up, our troop leader, a retired plumber named Lloyd Johnson, enlightened us on the story of the whispering pines.

"And you believed it," says my friend.

"The entire time." He laughs.

"And you didn't. Sure, you didn't. We all believed it eventually. Not only that, we never questioned it for fifteen years," I say.

I remember when Lloyd Johnson spoke about the psychology of the whispering pines.

"Only in these mountains can you find these rare whispering pines. They're rare, indeed. *Very rare*," he told us. "You see, they are sensitive to human touch and emotions; they pick up on them. If you very silently approach them and take the needles of a branch in your hand, then gently," Lloyd had one big plumber hand in the air and he took his other and caressed it like it was a baby, a smirk on his thin lips, "gently stroke them, well, that whispering pine will respond by swaying back and forth in the moonlight like it knows you. And if you listen careful-like," (here he whispers deep in his throat) "you can hear the whisper it makes as it sways." I recall shooting a surprised grin at Wilfred then, and he just shook his head at me like he didn't believe it. But he did. Later.

"Not at first," says Wilfred, squinting into the setting sun, then looking at me and lifting his eyebrows. "I had my doubts, you understand my analyzing everything. Besides, Lloyd Johnson the plumber? He was good at whittling sticks and cooking stew and fixing leaky faucets. But he was no *horticulturist*!" No, Wilfred did not believe old Lloyd Johnson right then.

It was two nights later we went to find the whispering pines. A heavy snow had fallen that evening, and Lloyd Johnson gathered all 15 of us into the cabin living room to give his speech. He was a heavy man, with a thick turkey neck that shook when he spoke, burying his chin in folds of skin whenever his mouth was open. His thin lips were no match for his form, in fact, we often joked that God had stuck them on by mistake. He leaned on a cane he had just finished whittling, and it had (like all his sticks had) a spiral handle that spun around into a ball at the top.

"Boys, we are about to go searching for the whispering pines, certainly a most mysterious tree here in the Smoky Mountains. We will all have flashlights, but once we get to the area we must be silent and turn off all the lights or we'll frighten them." Wilfred raised a brow at me across the room as he spun his flashlight in his hands. "The other scout leaders are already out there trying to locate the pines. Stay together!"

**W**e walked through those silent woods on padded snow; the trees were heavy with the thick cotton fortress and their branches bent low to the ground. There were muffled sounds of low-whispered conversations between us, our lights flashing over every object and into each other's faces shining white in the blackness. Our breaths formed clouds of steam, and I am sure we resembled a sloppy, dark train trudging slowly through the forest, the steam-breath tailing behind us and twisting up to the bright night sky. When our voices were too loud, Lloyd Johnson was quick to turn his chubby face to us and wave his giant Eskimo gloves to the ground.

Finally, after a 30 minute hike, we stopped and huddled around the plumber. In front of us a gorge dipped to blackness, but the other side was lit up by the moon's aura, and I could see the shadows of the great pines weave a jagged horizon line. Lloyd hushed





Vintage engraving courtesy of Pamela Hunter



"Really had us, didn't they?" I say to Wilfred now as I watch him sip the last of his coffee. The sun has lit the sky up a bright crimson red.

"Until 1949," he says to me then. "Right before old Lloyd Johnson died." I just look at him forgetful-like and don't say anything, because I want him to tell it again. As I have said, gets him every time. Here he goes.

"Yep. It was fifteen years later. I was back in Asheville for a family reunion, guess I was twenty-five. Well, there was Lloyd at this gathering, all hunched over on his cane. Time hadn't been at all kind to him. I sat next to him in the corner under this big pine tree, and he still had that damn laugh of his. He looks at me and says, 'Wilfred Beems. You still pick your nose?' I asked him if he still carved sticks like a crazy fool. He held up his cane, and it had that curl handle that ended in a ball at the top. 'Last one I carved. Stroke,' he said. Then we sat there in silence, like there was nothing left to say. I glanced up at those pine branches.

"Think it's a whispering pine?" I asked him. His face kind of turned to the branches, and then back at me, his mouth twisted up into a crooked grin, and he let out muffled, phlegm-filled laughter like he was having a heart attack and couldn't breathe. He turned to me still laughing, and said, 'Could be, if you get a thin yacht rope and tie it to the top, then go hide over there and get a group of Boy Scouts interested in talking to a god-damn tree.'

"I kind of froze then, just stared at his lined face, and for a moment I felt like a part of my childhood had been stolen. Then I turned to him and I says, 'Lloyd Johnson, you old son of a bitch.' And I laughed with him. Everybody was staring, thought we were out of our minds. When I stood to go, he handed me his cane. 'I won't need this any more,' he told me. He up and died two weeks later."

When Wilfred finished, he looked up at me and I sat with my feet up on the railing, feigning sleep like I was not listening to the story. He shifted in his chair, annoyed, until I grinned at him.

And the silence continued like that, until the cicadas buzzed in the trees and then they, too, fell silent, respecting the space where nothing is said.

*Timothy Agnew lives  
in Sarasota, Florida.*

us all and when our chatter stopped the silence was powerful. You could hear clumps of snow falling from trees 20 miles away.

The plumber stood at the foot of an enormous pine, its needles manicured with thick snow all the way up. The branches hung heavy, the lower ones actually kissing the ground and forming a solid base. "This," Lloyd began in a whisper, steam rolling out of his mouth, "is a whispering pine. We must be very silent and not raise our voices, because they are very sensitive, as I said, to sound." We looked at each other, and I recall those faces were set in frozen amazement, afraid to blink or move. Lloyd had us all. Including Wilfred.

Lloyd's great form stood in front of us, his fat Eskimo gloves sweeping us in with his gestures, and we the followers, the innocent students, the ensemble of idiots, watched as he lifted an arm and gently took the pine needles in his glove. He took his other hand and stroked the branch like it was a pet. In that silent evening, and from the thin mouth of Lloyd Johnson, plumber, came tiny epithets of baby gurgle. "Nice tree...ahhuh...mmm...indeed." And then that tree moved. It swayed a little as if from the wind, and as he continued to coax it swayed back and forth like a great pendulum. Lloyd turned his proud face to his disciples. "See?" And he grinned. "They are very sensitive to human touch." He

turned back to the tree and murmured more gurgle.

We took turns then, one after the other, under the careful guidance of Lloyd Johnson, stroking that tree's branches, talking to it like it was a baby cradled in each of our arms. It swayed so much that the snow fell from the top in a sprinkling of magic white dust over all our tiny heads. Lloyd just stood there with the other scout leaders grinning and chortling like he knew something that we did not.

We finally made the trip back to the camp after over an hour of standing on that cold mountainside talking to a pine tree. The group was filled with an excited energy, like we had discovered an ancient secret that would forever change the course of Boy Scouting. The 15 of us walked in leaps, anxiously chattering about the way that tree swayed in the night sky as we stroked its needles. We stayed up late that night, whispering about making the cover of *Boy's Life*, our flashlights bouncing off the cabin walls in a blackness filled with the bear-like snores of Lloyd the plumber and the other scout leaders. When we did finally sleep, we dreamt of wandering through the forest over a cotton ground lit only by the moon, and all around us whispering pines bent low as we passed, gentle giants watching over us in their world.





## Trains

What is it about trains  
that mesmerizes  
4-year-old boys  
and sometimes even their mothers.  
My son's preschool  
is next to train tracks  
and this morning  
as we waited outside his classroom,  
lunch bag in hand,  
for a look at the train we heard blowing  
its whistle, I asked him what was so great  
about trains. He looked at me with pity  
and said, wait, just wait,  
indicating it would become obvious  
and we were not to talk  
as the train approached,  
we should not interrupt  
the ceremony.  
My son doesn't know  
this but I, too, while feeling  
low long before he chugged  
into my life, heard a train whistle or two  
calling plaintively  
in the distance and dreamed  
of catching that train  
to anywhere,  
wanting to go, just go.

— Terry Godbey  
Maitland, Florida

## David's Dream

School is for learning  
and teachers  
are for teaching  
but sometimes we learn  
despite all this.  
Eleven years of age  
the problem was set:  
Write about dreams.  
And we all scribbled  
away about falling  
flying and cool nightmares.  
But David was different...  
he wrote about hope.

— Giovanni Malito  
Cork, Ireland

## On Wheels and Wings

Hands clasped behind her back,  
toe dug in grass that needed mowing,  
she hovered at the edge of the sidewalk.  
Watched the big kids race and swoop,  
felt her whole body yearn toward flight.

One of the boys crooked his finger, drew her near.  
He knelt, clamped his skates on her small shoes,  
pulled her to her feet, all wobbles.  
Placed his hand in the small of her back—  
and shoved.

She soared down the sloped front walk,  
sailed over the curb into the car-less street.

Knee-scrapes, elbow-bangs,  
breath-knock-outs followed  
but on that glorious day  
when she was five and envied birds,  
she learned to fly.

— Patricia Wellingham-Jones  
Tehama, California



Tyler Glenn, son of Terry Godbey. Photo taken in 1999 by Amanda Jones.



## Adult Education

I don't usually ride  
the bus but my car was  
in the shop so I sd,  
"What the hell.  
CDTA practically stops  
in front of our driveway,  
like door to door service,  
right?" Shows what I know.  
So I'm on the bus  
minding my own business,  
trying to read this article  
in GQ, you know, being cool  
and dignified as I am,  
and these two high school  
girls, like 15 years old,  
are sitting in front of me—  
cute little things  
but kind of sexy in a way,  
sort of like daughters,  
if you had kids, so I'm  
thinking like, "Aren't they  
adorable?" that is until  
I hear what they're talking  
about. I thought guys  
that age had toilet mouths  
but this conversation gave  
a whole new meaning to  
sewer systems. They were  
saying things like,  
"You didn't have to let  
him do that to you—  
just give him a blow job,  
that will keep him happy  
and it's a lot safer too—"  
And it went way downhill  
from there. I don't think  
I had any real idea what  
oral sex was until I took  
R&R in Vietnam—kids just  
weren't like that when  
we were growing up.  
From now on, when my car  
is in the shop, I'll just  
take a cab and listen to  
the hack piss and moan about  
how much he lost at the track  
or how his numbers haven't  
come in since the 17th century—  
that's something I can understand

Chicago's Shedd Aquarium - Photo by Brian Hunter



## Higher Education

He feels the inertia in the air where shade  
cuts the sunshine in lines on the Bermuda grass.  
A coolness lingers at the first of April  
in the foolishness of young women adjusting  
the millimeters of fabric to maximize  
tan lines. Country Club fathers are on the greens,  
putting. Across the quadrangle a soccer ball bounces  
off the kneecaps in the perpetuity  
of youthful movements. The professors are  
absent on Saturdays. Between applications of  
coconut oil, the sunbathers are reading what must  
be boring. *Madame Bovary* seems apropos.  
The azaleas have ceased blooming,  
and their purple puddles about the bushes. Under  
the double row of trees the speed limit  
is five miles too slow. There is an unreality about  
this place that has nothing to do with  
education. He lights some red dirt dynamite  
and gets higher in the coolness  
of a declining sun. In the clubhouse the daddies  
are dealing. *Madame Bovary* is alive  
and girlishly scheming. The dispossessed  
gooseflesh is washed free of teasing memories  
in the dormitory. The young men  
are intent in exploring the dynamics of backseats,  
the bouncing of balls in puddles of coconut oil.  
He wonders if there's a god as he scorches  
his finger and thumb. The campus  
becomes shadows and the darkness of breathing.

— Alan Catlin  
Schenectady, New York

— John Cantey Knight  
Metairie, Louisiana

## Camera Obscura

Context is all, you said.  
It was enough, in those days.  
And so I followed your words  
Down the path to  
The back of my brain where  
Your hand has lodged forever.

What wouldn't I have done  
For that grade?  
At night your images danced  
Inside my lids, bodies writhed,  
Violins and mud. No  
I wasn't at Dachau. But  
Your reminiscences served me well.

Gated into life too late,  
Uneasy in my skin with you,  
Those barbed memories stung.  
Yet, seeing you walk  
To your office, head down,  
Shabby shoes and briefcase,  
Hebraic, heroic,  
I wanted to place  
A rose on your desk.

— Mary Getchell  
Newport News, Virginia



## Blue Bat Ray

Toes rise and noses press close to the glass  
to glimpse the long thin tail and rodent face.  
A creature, classified as fish,  
that follows no fish rules.  
Its body is flat and wide;  
its mouth rests on its belly.

A freakish fish, singular in grace.  
We crowd together to watch  
its flat fins rise and fall,  
fluid as a bird in flight.

In these giant rooms  
with windows to the ocean world,  
we ooh and aah at the odd;  
ordinary forms are inferior here.  
But as soon as we return  
to our narrow school halls  
tastes shrink  
and differences  
cease to be admired.

— *Jacqueline Jules*  
*Arlington, Virginia*

## The Sophomore

The sophomore became  
an academic true believer,  
maybe a poststructuralist  
or a postmodernist  
or a Marxist  
or a formalist  
or a critical theorist  
or a deconstructionist  
or whatever thought package  
acclaimed as the cutting edge  
on that campus that year,  
and now he is  
a forty-year-old professor  
but still a sophomore,  
always the articulate fool,  
his little smile  
the smirk of those who believe  
they have the superior ideology  
is now forever frozen onto  
his face like a death mask.

— *Rod Farmer*  
*Farmington, Maine*

## Joe Bubba and the Apple Fire

Fire in the apple grove, no one to help  
but Billy Ray and me and Big Joe Bubba,  
boys on horses who saw smoke. Old Mr. Johnson  
staggered between rows, dragging a hose

like watching Eden burn. Water hissed  
in the crackle of trees, and the old man's sleeves  
caught fire. We jumped down running and rolled him  
over and over in dust, the breeze so hot

we gasped. We pried his fingers from the hose,  
and Joe Bubba lifted him heavy and led us  
through flames and branches out into sunlight  
and the cool, sweet breath of the world.

— *Walt McDonald*  
*Lubbock, Texas*

Photo by Robert (Bub) Nowicki





Photo by Albert Matulewicz



## Academic Counseling

"Just don't take any course where they make you read Beowulf," he said, "All that stuff about uncivilized Brits sitting around the hearth fire, eating vittles and grog, man it's enough to make you regurgitate, like puke from the top of the spiral staircase, know what I mean?, Take it from one who knows—There's No Such Thing as a Civilized Brit, just look at what passes for food in that country: cooked to shit meat, blood puddings, cold toast and tripe, Man you have to be sick to even think about eating shit like that, not that the Scots are any better—have you ever seen haggis? I don't care what it's soaking in,

there isn't an unblended Scotch made yet would get me past the look of that stuff. So what are you planning to do with this so called Major in English? write fairy stories? cause that's all that it is you know, fairies writing stories, mincing and prancing around acting like "gay blades", we all know what a gay blade is, don't we? And I don't even want to hear about your take on that subject, no wonder they all commit suicide, no self-respecting Irishman would ever get himself involved in something like that. You having another? Why not? Can't fly on one wing or drive on an empty tank, which reminds me, have you ever had a real drink in that God forsaken

country? That little drop of liquid at the bottom of your glass is the whiskey you ordered and ask them for a real cocktail like a martini made with ice and they treat you like a second class citizen from another planet. A man could go broke ordering trebles from some twit with an attitude, 900 years of being a prick is a tough tradition to get around, let me tell you. What's it take to get a drink around here, anyhow? This is your turf, the way these guys are treating me here, you'd think I had a communicable disease or something.

— Alan Catlin  
Schenectady, New York





## The Writing Teacher as Commuter

The Illinois Central joggles  
Us to work. Our noggins  
Full of other people's stories,  
We commute between their lives  
And our own.

— Janet Ruth Heller  
Portage, Michigan

## Schoolgirl

(for Sarah)

You wriggle into the uniform  
For Weston Green School,  
Replete with striped dress,  
Purple blazer, hat, and gym bag,  
And shiny black shoes.

At age four, you already write script  
And read simple books.  
We help you practice the wily "e,"  
Moving your pencil "up the hill."

On Saturdays, you don a pink leotard  
For dance class and spin around,  
A dervish with white skirt and flying plaits.

We ride the train to downtown London.  
You love the dinosaurs and mummies in the museums,  
And you ask a million "why" questions.  
Your mother patiently explains the Parthenon  
As we wander from room to room at your restless pace.

You wear a flowered dress and a hat with flowers  
When we visit Kew Gardens.  
Among the roses, daisies, and rhododendron,  
You are in full bloom.

— Janet Ruth Heller  
Portage, Michigan

## The Winning of the War Between the Pen and the Sword

(for John Foster West)

The students raise their faces toward the podium,  
the rawness of youth sharply contrasting  
the seasoned poet's smoothness.

Their backs to the row of opened windows,  
they sit still as the unruffled reflections of stars  
mirrored upon the lake out back.

Their ears pull lessons (and extra credit)  
from poems scattered, anthologized, collected,  
and their eyes never waver from his words,

until a mosquito,  
born and bred right on campus,  
finds his way in to tender exposed flesh.

— Nancy King  
Jacksonville, North Carolina



Two artists conversing as they walk in the Indiana Dunes





## OF REMEMBRANCE AND REGRET

by Jeff Manes

*marrubium vulgare*  
remedy for severe cough and bronchitis  
blooms from June to September  
leaves are wrinkled and rough on top  
found around waste places and roadsides throughout the U.S.  
common name: horehound



he knew Annie Oakley. When the old woman was young, she knew Annie Oakley. I was fascinated.

Growing up south of the Kankakee River, we were not afforded amenities such as kindergarten. Some did enjoy Story Hour nonetheless. Story Hour, held in our little country town's small but mighty library, was highlighted when the old woman described accounts of her life and times during the late 1800s. We were the first and last "class" the old woman ever taught at the library; there were only six or eight of us. She was in her early nineties then. The old woman was my "Story Hour Teacher." When I was five.

Had the aged anecdotist been a school-teacher or librarian once upon a time?

\* \* \*

The old woman lived in a ramshackle chicken coop that adjoined our makeshift ball diamond—deep left centerfield. The vacant lot hosted much baseball the next five summers and religiously, in the midst of our all-important games that final season, the old woman's woebegone silhouette would appear from behind her rickety screen. A "yoo hoo" or weary wave of a wrinkled arm she used to summon one of us to her doorstep.

My buddies had gotten wise to her daily ritual and would turn deaf as posts whenever she cried out. Not to worry, *he* could be counted on to put down his Louisville Slugger or mitt and pick up a loaf of raisin bread or a box of those dried apricots and prunes from Brown's Grocery Store. Sometimes, I would have to run to the post office for her. Just paying a bill, I figured. No one ever visited her.

I found entering the raconteur's dark, dank, labyrinth of clutter and boxed-up memories kind of creepy compared to sitting spell-bound in the well-lit library. A huge deer head wore cobwebs like a Christmas tree wears tinsel. It took up the entire wall of the coop. The creature moonlighted as both roommate and sentry; its fierce marble eyes challenged me. No, she had admonished, the poorly-mounted beast was not a deer. Rather, a cousin. Wapiti, she called it. Wapiti. And still the word lingers.

The old woman's cheeks were an unnatural salmon hue from caked-on rouge. A long grizzled braid like a Chinaman's queue divided slumped shoulders. Her turkey wattled jowls and milkless flaps dangled with age. The latter, entirely exposed a time or two, embarrassed me. Missing buttons.

Our talks were too brief, hurried. I was always in a rush to get back to the game—like a doctor, late for tee time, trying to escape his final patients of the day. The old woman had no family doctor.

Once she asked me what ancestry I was. "American," I took a guess. A liver-spotted, crepe paper hand touched my cheekbones and jaw; her doing so reminded me of an old photograph I'd seen of Helen Keller reading President Eisenhower's face. The old woman smiled and patted me on the head. Her eyes seemed to twinkle. Probably her cataracts. Yet, it was as if she knew something I didn't.

More often than not a reward was to be had in exchange for my miscellaneous deeds. If payment was of the monetary kind, a penny, I was to decline it. The old woman usually gave me a piece of butterscotch candy or a root beer barrel. Other times, towards the end, a strange tasting menthol-like candy was doled out. Horehound, she called it. It

sounded like a cuss word to me. I hated the stuff. The old woman didn't want to be without it, though, especially in the fall when it started getting colder outside.

Summer hied. Autumn neared. Our ball games grew more intense. Running errands for the old woman became bothersome.

One afternoon she yelled and waved for one of us. My cohorts, expert at ventriloquism by this time, giggled through their teeth telling me not to look at her. They assured me that she would eventually go away.

"Yoo hoo. Yoo hoo. Yoo hoo. Yoooo hoooo." More giggles. "Bobby... Bobby... Yoo hoo," her voice cracked. The game had come to a halt. "I have Pepsi Cola. Bobby? Pepsi Cola, Bobby."

I had hit a double. My best friend Tony was on the other team playing shortstop. He glanced at me. I had my hands on my knees, my foot on the bag, and I was facing the plate...Tony shouted at his pitcher, "Throw the ball, moron." The game continued. And behind me, rusted hinges groaned as the forlorn screen door closed. All of this occurred when I was ten.

My mother took a job as an assistant at the library; on occasion I'd stop by and say "hello" while she went about her duties. Rainy afternoons mostly. I was getting older and had other interests but still enjoyed spending time with the likes of Jack London, O. Henry, and John Steinbeck. I was fourteen.

**T**oday, I find myself nearly two hundred feet above Lake Michigan gazing out at neighboring blast furnaces similar to the decrepit dinosaur I stand on. I'm an iron-





Written in pencil on the back of this photo is the following information.

*Top Row: Theodore Sanders. Juilus [sic] Patterson. Bertie Southhard. Joe Millspaw. Roy Stuart. Earl Maze. James Jackson. Joseph Boone. Harris Piquenieu.*

*Middle Row: Maudee Wise. Drucilla Moore. Carrie Spicher. Helen Sparks. Florence Ossenber. Prindee Minifield. Ada Rhoads. Mary Richard. Garnet Lilly. Leota Hoffman.*

*Bottom Row: Amanda Bell. Mildred Parker. Emma Paul. Ora Wallace. Madonna Southhard. Katherine Childers. Rose Hampton. Louise Worley. Miss Jackson's room.*

Embossed on the lower right under the photograph is: *Clark, Westside Square, Anderson, Ind.*

worker. I don't mind the heights. Never have. According to my mother, before she passed, it's in my blood.

A lone gull swoops by; she emits a wistful squall, and becomes part of the horizon. She....

It is early September. Autumn nears.

While sitting with my mother in the hospital, I had asked her about the old woman. Come to find out she was Native American. The poor soul was so bleached with age I couldn't tell. I'm one-eighth Blackfeet.

Mom went on to say that the old woman

had traveled with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, surely the Annie Oakley connection. And also, without doubt, the girl grown old languished alone—her final years spent confined to a musty hovel once built to house fowl.

No Wild West novelty her. Rather, a good novel, partially read.

The prognostications of my friends did not hold true on that shameful summer afternoon of remembrance and regret. And I didn't fully heed their words. I glanced back at Mrs. Louden from second base. There. I said

it. Louden. Mary Louden.

She didn't go away. She has never gone away.

*In memory of librarians Mary Rybarski and Rhoda Custer, and Mary Louden, "Story Hour Teacher."*

*Jeff Manes lives in Lowell, Indiana.*



## Professor Charles Tinkham

You are a man  
Of many  
Accomplishments  
And endeavors  
Reaching beyond  
Human frailties  
And limitations

You are a teacher  
In word  
And example  
Who reaches  
Into the heart

You draw out  
The essence  
And spirit  
From the well  
Of a soul

You are a friend  
And a mentor  
To many—  
  
A special gift  
For which  
We are all blessed

— Cathy Michniewicz  
Whiting, Indiana

## The Retirement and The Tulip

A telephone announces the world.  
When last I spoke to this woman, caught  
between the squeaking office and the hall  
giggling with children, I held a form for fingerprints.

She congratulates me for living a legal life.  
Soon I am back at being wet with a shower and choosing  
a shirt and hoping ice on the windshield is melting.

I used to drive to locked rooms and kicked doors.  
A girl tightened her lips to iron, spit bullets  
at her friend, chased her to kids  
scattering in the crazy crowd of caged hawks.  
Loose seams and ripped cuffs, their clothes  
were tight with love's friction.  
I remember key scrapings on my car.

Now I walk past a door clean as a tooth  
of a baby after a mother's brushing.  
Students in loose shirts listen as they did  
when they were in a tiny bed with hot chocolate and a story.  
Words lighting their eyes cancel the motorcycle  
screeching out of the playground.

I remember measuring my voice in front of chairs  
full for the first time, for me, on the next day.  
I am back to having a function, happy  
to hear a boy talk a new language, and a crowd cheer  
as if he swallows sun's fire and spits a tulip.

— Mark Taks  
Rodeo, California

## My First Day of Kindergarten

I am not 5 but 45, helping out in my son's  
new class, having gone all those years ago  
straight from my mother's arms  
to first grade, no fuzzy kindergarten  
with its snack time and naps.  
Then we sat at desks, not at tables in groups,  
and we kept mostly quiet,  
but these children bubble and lap  
and slop about the room like a glass  
about to spill. I cannot make Janall stop  
throwing blocks on the floor  
as the fifth-grade weatherman  
on the classroom TV predicts a sunny day.  
It is windy, even cloudy at times, in the classroom,  
and Janet presses against me like a cat,  
follows me, wraps her little arms around me.  
After arts and crafts, as I scrub green and purple paint  
off her legs, she says, *My momma's gonna kill me  
when she sees this paint on my clothes.* She turns  
her liquid brown eyes on me. *No she won't,*  
I say cheerfully. *Your momma loves you.* She slides  
a finger into her mouth. *My momma's mean,* she says,  
and I want to believe she is playing pretend.  
When at last it is time to retrieve backpacks,  
the children form a Jacob's ladder of a line  
and take their energy home,  
jittery legs unable to keep them rooted  
to the ground, arms like branches  
reaching out.

— Terry Godbey  
Maitland, Florida





## THE FIRST DAY

by Alec Germond

Have you moved before? If you have, what was it like?  
Happy? Sad? Exciting? Frustrating? It can be tough, trying to make new friends,  
trying to forget the past, which you had experienced.  
I'm going to tell you a story about what it might be like on your very first day of school.  
It will probably be something like this . . .

**M**an, I don't think I'm going to be liked, I won't know anybody. What will I do? I thought while sitting on the bus, all alone. Everybody sitting around me was talking to someone, while I was sitting by myself, looking out the window. 'Man I probably look like some geek, not talking to anyone and looking out the window,' I thought. As we neared the school, I became nervous. My hands became sweaty and I got goosebumps from chills inside me.

SCRRREEEEEEEEECCHHHH!!!!!!  
went the brakes as the bus pulled to a slow stop. As I looked out my window on the bus, it was right there, the doors, which led to NO FRIENDS.

I walked to the doors and opened them; I didn't know what to expect. It turned out the way I had imagined. I didn't know where to go; I didn't know who was in what grade. Now, I can't ask anyone where I need to go. I was walking up and down the school hallways and everybody was staring at me like I was from outer space or something. When I finally stopped after walking forever, I saw a boy standing over in the corner gazing around. I went up to him and said "Hi." He didn't even budge. I walked away with my head low and my worn-out greenish backpack sliding off my shoulders. After about five seconds, he said to me, "What did you want?"

I turned around with my head still low and replied, "Are you talking to me? Or someone else?"

"Weren't you the one who came over here

and said 'Hi'?"

"Yeah, I just wanted to know where to go."

"That's all? Are you new or something?"

"Yeah, I'm new." I held out my lunch money, hoping that he wouldn't beat me up. I didn't know how he would reply, since I didn't know anything about this school except that I knew I wouldn't have any friends.

"What's this for? Are you from some charity or something?"

"Y-y-y-o-ou're n-not going to beat me up?"

"Of course not! Where would you get such an idea like that?"

"I just thought..."

"That's your first problem there. Don't think bad or stupidly about anybody here. O.K.?"

"O.K."

"Now, you said you were new here? And you need help finding where to go?"

"Yelp!" [Sic]

"O.K. Then, let me see your schedule."

I reached deep into my pocket to find my schedule. "Here it is."

He read it over and over again and finally shouted, "Woowweeee! You have the exact schedule as I do!"

"I do?" I didn't really know how to react to the excitement he was showing. He must have been excited to have me as a friend. "You have Mrs. Brown, Mrs. McCall, Mr. Clemons and Mrs. LaGrange?"

"Exactly! Also, my name is Ben Williams."

"Awesome! I'll know someone now! Oh.

Yeah. My name is Alec Germond."

"Hurry up! We're going to be late for class!"

We ran through the hallways, almost knocking some people down. As soon as we got into my first class (homeroom), Ben introduced me to my other classmates. 'Man, I was totally wrong about this day. I'm going to have lots of friends now that Ben is introducing me to everyone.'

**O**nce we started class, Mrs. Brown introduced me to the class. Mrs. Brown asked if anyone would like to show me around throughout the day. Sure enough, Ben was the first to raise his hands. From that moment on, I knew I would have fun at school and know somebody.

Have you ever made a new friend? Of course you have. It feels great once you have just made a friend, doesn't it?

If you have moved, you probably had strange feelings about the new school, just like I did, right? It went O.K., I hope. If it didn't or you haven't tried to make any new friends, try talking to a kid in one of your classes. It worked for me. Why not for you?

*Alec Germond, age 12,  
attends North Oldham Middle  
School in Goshen, Kentucky.  
See page 90 for his photo taken  
with those of his classmates.*

Editor's note: Alec moved from Crown Point, Indiana to Kentucky and this essay describes his going to a new school.

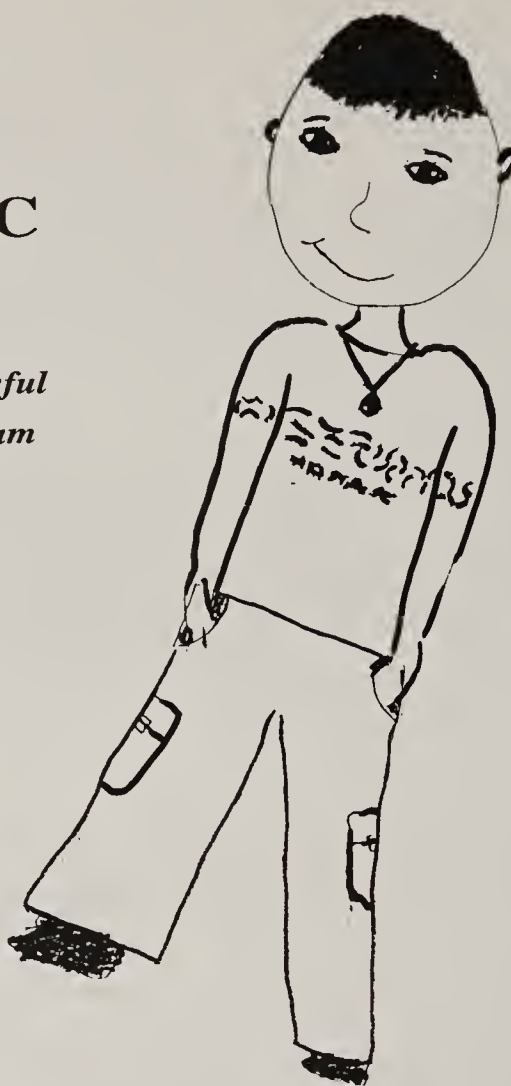




## ART MAGIC

*Or  
How to Have a Successful  
Elementary Art Program*

*by Martyna Bellessis*



*"Art magic" by Julia Wilson, Grade 5, University Elementary,  
Bloomington, Indiana, after Kathe Kollwitz (b. 1867).*

**A**n art plan can be divided into semesters, units, cycles or overviews. A successful art teacher definitely has an idea of what is to be accomplished during a year of study. The philosophy behind a visual arts program defines the types of instruction that will occur. If a course of action is not discussed, written down, pondered upon, art class becomes a hodge-podge of ideas. There must be a sequence of learning, whether it is in process, vocabulary, aesthetics, or materials. Do not "wing it" or improvise lesson plans because students' art time is too valuable.

Students should work with a variety of materials. They need to know the limits of the materials and realize what is age- or experience-appropriate. First graders do not work with India ink or log into Renaissance nudity on a CD. Pupils will explore many different aspects of art history. Curriculum should be developed over a period of time and taught with a variety of techniques. Cooperative learning standards and the life-skills agenda are perfect partners in the art room. There should be an emphasis on all vocabulary: not just the memorization of terms, but also a visual representation of the words. Everyone knows that the primary colors are red, blue, and yellow. However,



not all subject areas can portray their formulas such as art does with a red apple, blue bird, yellow sun. Lines will effectively show one point perspective. The meaning of the word "shading" can be shown with an endless array of methods.

Another idea is that students can explore different aspects and periods of art history. This can be accomplished by using many techniques and methods that they will find interesting. Pupils can make up art games and share with one another. *Art Bingo*, *Art Rummy* and *Artists Trivia* are a few examples. There are many commercial art games

on the market and some are very worthwhile. Storytelling about the lives of the artists fascinates children and will hold the attention of younger art students. Many excellent books about artists, as well as videos and CD ROMS, are available. Check out computer catalogues for more help. Faith Ringgold, an African-American female artist, has written and illustrated books about her paintings. Art history can be taught in a sequential manner that begins with a known entity, such as the alphabet, and proceeds to new knowledge. Third graders can begin with "A" and finish with "G." Here are some suggestions:

- A:** Audubon, Anguissola, architecture, ancient Greek art
- B:** Bruegel, Bonheur, Bearden, basket weaving
- C:** Cezanne, Chagall, Cassatt, Catlett, clay forms
- D:** Degas, Dulaney, designs
- E:** El Greco, Exter, exhibits, Egyptian art
- F:** Fragonard, Flack, fashion designs
- G:** Gauguin, Grandma Moses, god's Eyes





"Art magic" by students of University Elementary, Bloomington, Indiana, as follows: "B" by Emily Morrow, Grade 3, after Pieter Bruegel (b. 1525); "A" on cover of Aya Kitagawa's book for Grade 5; and "D" by Dennis Wilson, Grade 3, after Edgar Degas (b. 1834).

Fourth Graders can begin with "H" and end with "N":

- H: Winslow Homer, Anna H. Huntington
- I: Ingres, Izquierdo, illustrations
- J: Jawlensky, Gwen John, Japanese art
- K: Klee, Kandinsky, Kollwitz, kites, Kahlo
- L: Leonardo, Leyster, landscape
- M: Matisse, Manet, Monet, Millet, Miro, Michaelangelo, Morisot, Moss, masks, Mexican art
- N: Nolde, Nevelson

Fifth Graders can continue with "O" to "T":

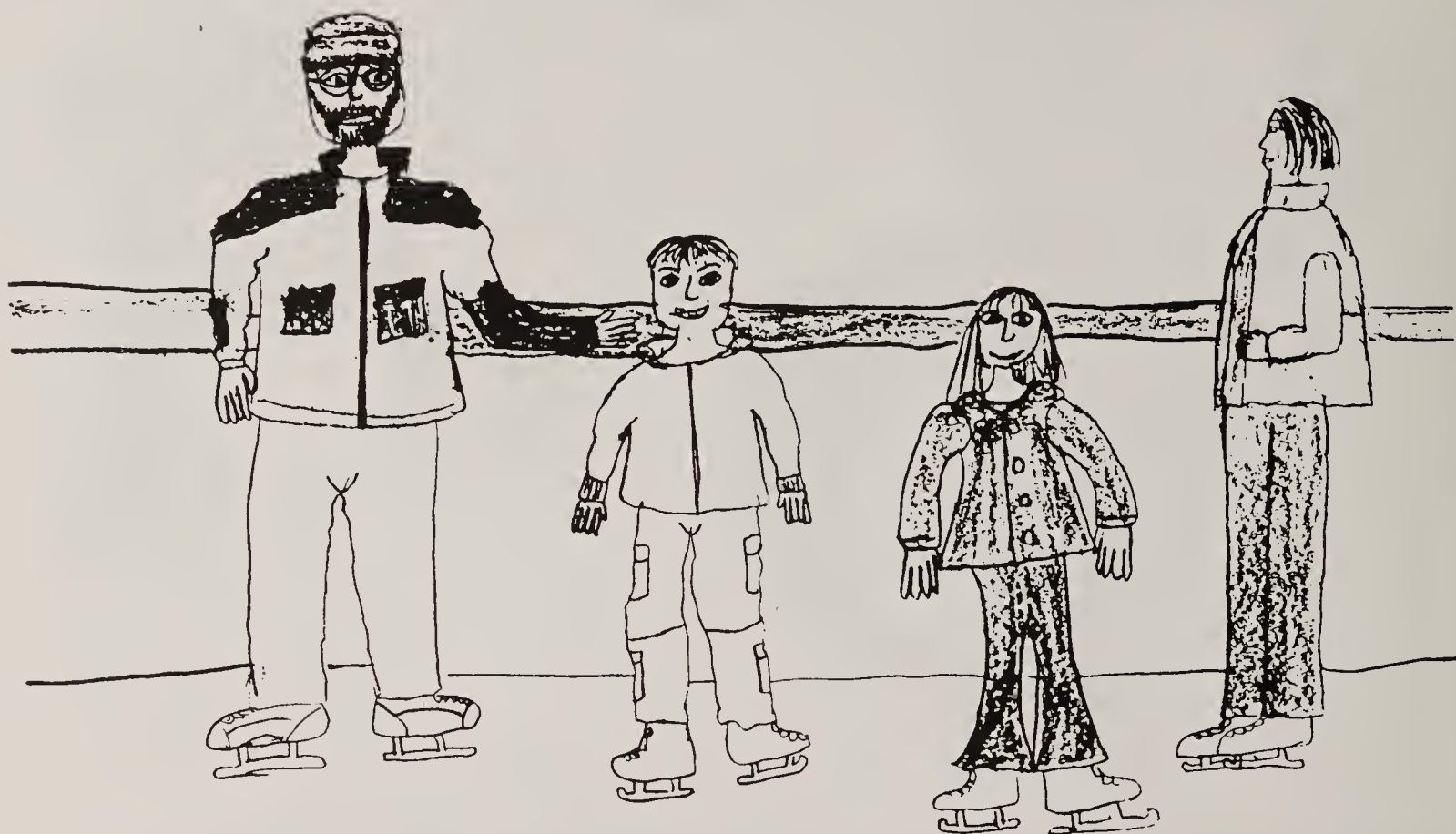
- O: O'Keefe, Origami, Op Art
- P: Picasso, Beatrix Potter, perspective, Pop Art
- Q: Quercia, Quick-to-See
- R: Remington, Russell, Renoir, Ringgold, Riviera, Roman art
- S: Seurat, Schapiro, South American art forms, stitchery
- T: Tanner, Alma Thomas, textiles

Sixth Graders finish the alphabet:

- U: Utrillo, Udaltsova
- V: Van Gogh, Vigee Le Brun
- W: Wood, Warhol, weaving
- X: Xydias, Xiong
- Y: Yalinas, Yani
- Z: Zurbaran, Zorach, Zuni



*"Art magic" by Rebecca Wallace, Grade 4, University Elementary, Bloomington, Indiana, after Grandma Moses (b. 1860).*



Seventh and eighth graders can study many of the "isms": Cubism, Dadaism, Expressionism, Impressionism, Surrealism. To identify the materials that illustrators use, begin a unit on making books. Each grade level makes a different type of book. When the students graduate, they will have quite a collection of handmade items. Some will have watercolor examples, others will have different examples of printmaking, and others may have created computer-generated images. This part of curriculum is perfect to share with other classes, including setting up a display in the media center or any other prominent place. Exhibits such as this begin the process of students developing pride in their artwork. They see that their work is valued. They hear comments about the exhibit and become aware that art is appreciated.

Encourage pride in the workmanship of students and help them achieve the best that they can. Get excited when they are really trying to accomplish excellent artwork. Artists throughout history have practiced and practiced their craft. That's why their final products are so revered.

Elementary art class is the perfect time to introduce a humanistic approach to teaching. Positive art criticism can help students realize methods to improve their work and be sympathetic to the quandaries of others. In this class, there is more than one way to solve a problem. Creative thinking is definitely rewarded here. Everyone should profit from participating in these activities. Intermediate grades can connect art ideas with a variety of subject areas. Here are some basic concepts.

**Social studies:** Artists can be explored that were prominent in a certain time period. Their historical significance can be identified by various methods. Crafts that were important can be traced and students can reproduce them, adding their own ingenuity.

**Mathematics:** Utilize math vocabulary and use artistic expression. Shapes, patterns, fractions, ratios are a sampling of terms that can easily be transferred to the art domain.

**Language arts:** Illustrate words, ideas, stories. These can be permanent records of students' progress.

**Music:** Connect art periods with musical compositions. Draw the instruments. Make posters to advertise activities.

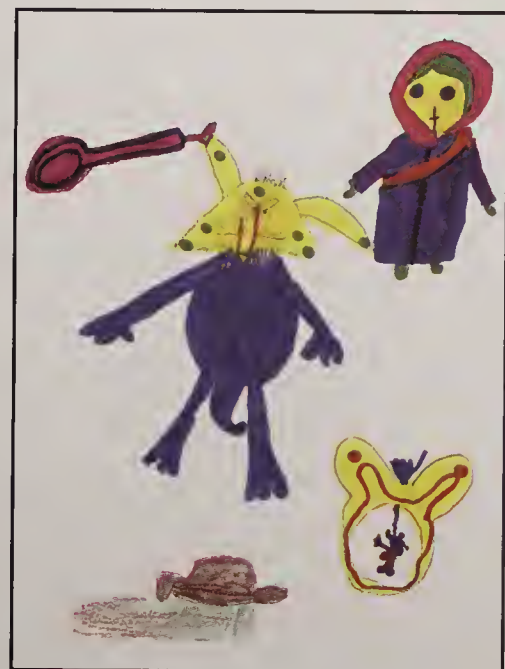
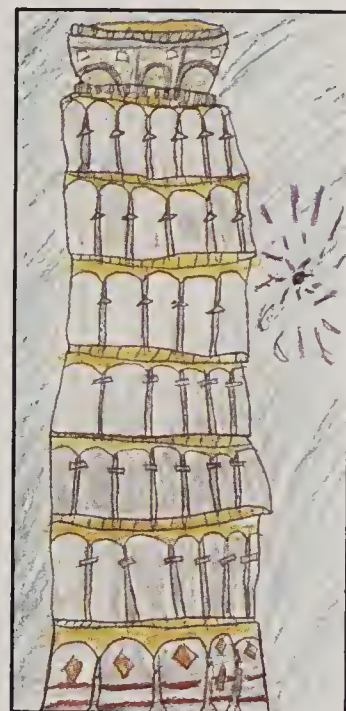
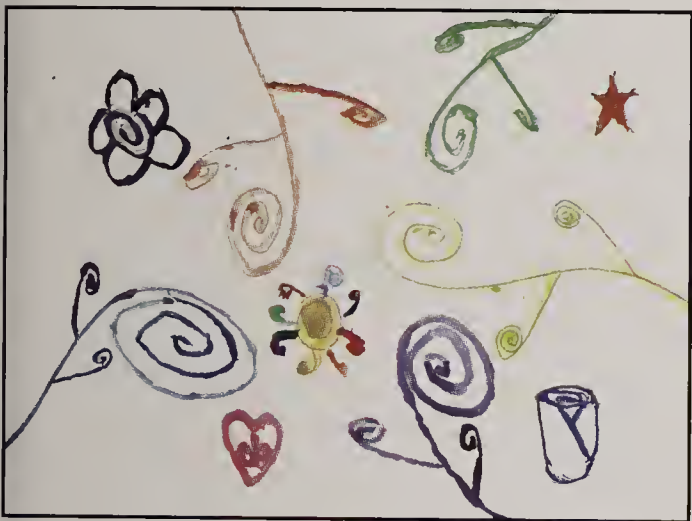
As art teachers, we need to improve methods for successful teaching. Art time and art experiences must be challenging and informative. We also need to strive to educate the general public, parents and administrators. Tell them our goals and expectations. Share the joy of teaching. Participate in community projects. Art must become an integral part of everyone's routine, not be an elitist commodity for a select few.

*Martyna Bellessis now lives in Dyer, Indiana.*





*“Art Magic” from  
the students of  
Martyna Bellessis at  
University Elementary,  
Bloomington, Indiana*





*Julia Wilson*  
*Grade 5*

*art after*

*Beatrix Potter*  
*(b. 1888)*

*Zachary Wallace*  
*Grade 3*

*art after*

*El Greco*  
*(b. 1541)*

*Mailyn Fidler*  
*Grade 2*

*art after*

*Italian*  
*architecture*

*Kelsey Lynch*  
*Grade 6*

*art after*

*Maurice Utrillo*  
*(b. 1883)*

*Rebecca Wallace*  
*Grade 4*

*art after*

*Paul Klee*  
*(b. 1879)*

*Dennis Wilson*  
*Grade 3*

*art after*

*Audrey Flack*  
*(b. 1931)*

*Emily Morrow*  
*Grade 3*

*art after*

*Jean Fragonard*  
*(b. 1732)*

*Aya Kitagawa*  
*Grade 5*

*art after*

*Emil Nolde*  
*(b. 1867)*



Poetry

&

Prose

Poetry Editor

Cathy Michniewicz

Prose Readers

Albert Matulewicz

Cynequa Sain



Poetry

&

Prose

Cathy Michiewicz  
Poetry Editor

Cynthia Bain  
Albert Michiewicz  
Prose Readers



## As I Count Your Days

I count the snowflakes as I count your days.

The hollows hold evaporated stars.

Each one as unique as a poem thought,

bears witness to winter's eternity.

*Photograph by Kingsley*



The landscape is the color of old wood.

Vividness would disturb its elegance.

Within its depth I carve your Slavic face

And feel my fingers warmed by memory.

*— Sandra Fowler  
West Columbia, West Virginia*



## November Night,

## Sleep Talk Captured

*Careless and sweet,  
so the moon was once,  
so the moon was.*



Now things rage with a sound  
of wind on snow peaks, a steel-mill

shrieking—the ideal number of  
musical wave crests passing each second;  
it's the number I made across geologic time, perhaps

to make the body pains of this day. And the smiles—  
furtive and plain—and the skies like  
tropic seas teeming with suns.



On the mountain the granite veins,  
travelers into earth, darken

like the night to come, complete  
with black and starry cargos.



Night and dying begin,  
sneak over on all fours,

sneak over all  
till we

sprint away and stand as lanterns,  
squinting light outward. Now the lumens of us  
wink one-liners across eternity, break into dance.



One day we hear a wind, crisp  
against a blurred and pitchlike rock;  
we call it the laughter in piccolos.



Again the night sky padding overhead—  
sleek, crouched, knowing full well  
about gardens and certain coal cars

that gleam without speech, without weight  
like the high ceiling of daytime.



Again the quiet of fields and the moon  
lit by desires of silk, desires of sun fire  
to teach us whenever our eyes are wide, telling us

to be purposeful and dance away—arabesque—  
from the weight of plain white parchments,  
the folded papers of any lost age.

To dance off along drum and  
flute tunes dreamed and surely forged  
outside geologic time.



*Careless and sweet,  
so the moon was once,  
so the moon was.*

— Tim Bellows

Gold River, California





## Almost Winter No One Here

I'm dressed in a yellow rain suit,  
the only human outside.  
To a fish I must look like a full, summer moon  
peering under the dock  
at the spider's private web of dead flies  
and sparkling beads of splashed-up water—  
all in transition.

The next cabin's trimmed windows  
are boarded shut. Without light  
the cabin will disappear by dinner  
into the wilderness dark behind it,  
as if the dark were  
a slowly rising flood, edging  
through the dry grass toward the windows.

I stretch out in solitude in the lateness of the year,  
on the beach  
above the industrious spider,  
back to the approaching dark of the woods.

I'm out of season, everyone's gone.  
I'm too quiet, like a cottonwood stump.  
A far-off loon rises, doesn't see me.

If I were to stomp on the dock,  
frightened minnows would scatter,  
as if summer thunder had cracked too loudly  
and off key,  
when snow should have fallen.

— Robert P. Cooke  
Highland, Indiana

## Modern Haiku Sequence

Leaves fall as they change colors  
They crunch beneath my feet  
Lovers whisper to the wind

Cold December, bare branches  
A whisk of light snow  
A heart shivers

Twilight kisses the earth  
The setting sun fades  
A quiet memory lives

— Cathy Michniewicz  
Whiting, Indiana

## Full Cycle

Leaves linger in my memory  
full of childhood romps and laughter,  
a hierarchy of vivid color  
plus a sequel of crinkly sound.  
Now I'm prone to see the whole tree,  
to watch branches give up their reign  
as leaves compete with the sunsets  
and mood swings reach the outer limbs.  
Still, I watch the neighbor's children  
leap into their leaf fantasies  
and measure these autumn moments  
not so much by the time that has passed  
but by the singleness of all life.

— Neil C. Fitzgerald  
South Dartmouth, Massachusetts

## Now and Then

The wind blew, the trees shook, while calm as a relief  
I sat naked in the sun, and saw and felt  
A spot of nakedness covered by a leaf.

Was nature giving me a hint of shame?—  
I did not think so. What was there to hide with no  
one near?  
If anything at all, autumn, richly indiscreet, played  
a game:

A fig leaf—no one need recoil—  
I stood up, embraced the gestures of the tree,  
the autumn wind.  
If there is gold to spare, start here with me, the lacquer  
and the foil.

If not a man, something leaner, in between:  
The child I was in many autumns past,  
Someone who loved him might have cast in gilded figurine.

It is the undemanding willingness for some not all  
That makes us unashamed to take a single leaf  
And hold no grudge for greed or greatness against the fall.  
That man, that child, that figurine impeccably undressed—  
There is a lengthened gallery of desire somewhere in the sun:  
Some now, some long ago a memory reduced, somewhere a figure  
unconfessed.

— Charles Edward Eaton  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina



## A Mouthful of Snow



The snow settles in for a long visit,  
sleeps between spaces  
of the slat rail fence on the porch  
and bare arms of the elms

raised in supplication to the steel  
gray clouds, the falling flakes chalking  
their trail through a labyrinth of ice,  
if by chance they want to return.

Sleet hurries down the driveway,  
hounds anxious to wrap their toes  
around hallow indentations in the walk,  
the bicycle leaning against the house.

Last night the storm came suddenly,  
evading drifts of sleep, bags packed  
with a scornful wind rescinding  
Indian summer.

This morning the door to the tool shed  
stands aghast, mouth full of snow,  
in mute denial of an unwelcome guest,  
wondering how long it will stay.

This snow has been here before—  
falling on Peter the Hermit  
walking about Europe convinced  
he is somebody else,

on Amundsen, in 1928 when he disappeared  
over the pole, searching  
for the airship of his friend,

on Gustavus Adolphus  
walking outside his palace  
one glacial morning,  
head tilted back tasting the flakes,

and on me,  
falling into all the places  
I might have stood,  
in a century of black and white,

imprisoned in a windowless castle  
with coffin shaped rooms for the dead,  
a quill pen in my hand, outside,  
all that's left of autumn

Sliding naked into the flurry  
of the storm throwing on  
a long scarf of winter.

— Jack Rickard  
Phoenix, Arizona





## S n o w

(for Paul Roth)

I sit in snow.

About a foot and a half.

It pays to be close  
to your work.

The neighbors think I'm nuts,  
propped in a chair,  
notebook and pen,  
22 degrees,  
(but no wind).

Pale ale sunk in snow.

There's life on every side  
of ignorance.  
Behind every smooth, graphite shadow,  
lurking around every perfect curve  
of ignorance  
there is amazing activity.

So while neighbors shimmy up  
to the couch  
as Oprah presents  
another book lovers' show,  
(all novelists),  
I wait patiently  
for a poem to appear  
among tomato stakes  
herded like crucifixes  
into their tiny corral.

I could be the nearby surf of cars  
or the constant bantering of crows,  
or the winter maple  
completely naked  
except for the elegant sleeves  
of English ivy  
covering each bare shoulder.

Sure,  
the occasional dark bird  
floats overhead,  
and finches like flecks of pepper  
crowd the uppermost branches.  
We knew that could happen.

But participation  
in momentary joy  
can never be overestimated.

Certain poems appear from nowhere,  
while others perch,  
shiny black seeds for eyes,  
on a snow shovel's  
cobalt blue handle.

So I wait.

Perhaps white dreams  
of nude dogwood  
will fall on my head,  
or the oppressive grey uniform  
of the afternoon returning  
home from work  
will reveal itself to be made of silk  
stained with egrets, bamboo,  
and burnt outlines of beautiful Chinese women  
emerging from plum blossoms.

— Alan Britt

*Reisterstown, Maryland*



*Chinese cut-out art*



## THE YIDDISH MAGICIAN

*by Charles B. Tinkham*

*Skylark* recently received a letter from Rivke Katz in which she states: "April 24, 2001, marked the 10th anniversary of Menke Katz's death in our little 'forest house' in Spring Glen, New York."

It is indeed hard to believe that a man of such extraordinary talent has been gone from us for over ten years.

In my case, I think I more than half believed that this poet was actually immortal.

Menke Katz lived poetry and poetry lived him. In reading his work, one feels his passion, his overwhelming desire to know and to understand. I would say that many of his poems are religious experiences. In many, he seeks the unknowable, he examines the fundamental elements of faith, he delves to the sources of wonder.

His work is both concrete and abstract. For him, the bright penny lying in the gutter is a prostitute. In this one image alone, he criticizes us for the disrespect shown the prostitute. He wants us to know that she is fully and vitally human; she belongs to the family of man.

Menke essentially writes love poems. He reminds me of Robert Graves' statement: "The only true poems are love poems."

Menke celebrates life, he devotes himself to it and is intent upon thanking God for the beauty of his existence, for the beauty of all existence.

I never knew Menke personally, but for years we exchanged letters decorated with his famous flowers. He encouraged me to study the Bible more carefully, especially the "Psalms of David," "The Song of Songs," "Ecclesiastes," Luke, etc. Over the course of the years, he published at least 30 of my poems, taking delight especially in a poem I addressed personally to him.

Menke's love for life was so intense and full of gratitude that I was amazed he could sustain it so well in poem after poem. He was a natural. He reminds me of these lines:

Some say John was a Christian.

Some say John was a Jew.

But I say John was a natural man.

We can not afford to forget Menke and his poetry. In such troubled times as these, we need to comprehend love and forgiveness, and charity. We must master "caritas," or we will lose our very humanity.





## ABOUT MENKE KATZ

by Dovid Katz

**M**enke Katz was born on April 12, 1906 in the Lithuanian city of Svintsyán (now Svencionys, Lithuania), where his parents had moved shortly before his birth from neighboring villages where their families had lived for six hundred years. In 1914, his father, Heershadóvid, left for America, World War I broke out and Menke's mother Badonna was left alone with her five children.

Menke's closest childhood friend was his eldest brother Eltshik, who was taken for forced labor by the occupying German army in 1917, took ill and died at the age of seventeen in a deserted barrack. He was buried in his mother Badonna's village, Michálishkek (now Michalishki, Belorussia). Menke, then eleven, spent two and a half years in Michalishkek, a tiny village on a near-perfect island, where things had not changed for centuries. It was full of dreamers, kabbalists, singing beggars, and violent love affairs. The only escape was by the ancient ferry that ran on dragropes, and could be engaged by yelling oneself hoarse, until Yoorka, the barefoot "captain," came across to fetch his passengers.

In Michalishkek, Menke became part of a children's "break-in team." He and other boys were more than a little curious about the secrets of Jewish mysticism embodied in the Kabbalah, which according to Jewish tradition may only be studied by learned males over the age of forty. The boys managed, with some pretext, to trick Chaim the Smith into giving them a skeleton key for the synagogue. They snuck in at dead of night, read for hours by candlelight, and managed to find the Seven Heavens. After much argument, they opted for the third, the Heaven of Manna.

In 1920, Badonna and the four surviving children emigrated to Passaic, New Jersey. Their father Heershadóvid had barely

enough to eat from working in a silk factory in nearby Lodi. He later "went into business for himself" and eked out a living from his "five businesses," all run from home—ice, coal, gas, kerosene, and oil.

Menke, thirteen and a half on arrival at Ellis Island, had been in Passaic barely a few months when he decided that New Jersey was not for him. Cousin Avromélla agreed to take him in, in his rooms at 251 East 2nd Street. He attended Dewitt Clinton High School where teachers were impressed by the English poetry the immigrant youth was producing.

One day, working on an English poem in Seward Park Library on East Broadway, he was approached by the Yiddish poet Abba Shtoltzenberg (1905-1941), who told him there is a modern literature in Yiddish, and eventually introduced Menke to his friend, the Yiddish poet Alexander Pomerantz (1901-1965), editor of a radical trilingual (Yiddish-English-Russian) journal called *Sparták*, where Menke's first Yiddish poem, about the Bowery and its bums, appeared in 1925.

**H**e eloped to Los Angeles with his first wife, Chashka Blacker, who wrote Yiddish short stories, in 1926, and was back in New York a year later. They had two children, Troim and Noah. The marriage broke up and Menke lived alone in furnished rooms on the Lower East Side for decades.

When *Dray Shvester* (*Three Sisters*), was published in 1932, it was roundly condemned, and resulted in his expulsion from the left wing Yiddish writer's union, Proletpén. Menke subsequently began to write poems on the burning issues of the day, thereby conforming to the requirements of left-oriented Yiddish literary circles on the

Lower East Side. For a few short years, he was even a hero of the left, and his second book, *Dawning Man*, was published by Proletpén in 1935.

The most bitter conflict over his work erupted following publication in 1938 of this third work, a large canvas, a two-volume epic called *Brenendik Shtetl* ("Burning Village"), encompassing both the timeless magic of the wondrous characters of Michálishkek, alongside the horrific events of the First World War, in a narrative structure.

Both at Proletpén meetings and in the daily leftist Yiddish newspaper, the *Frayhayt*, *Burning Village* was repeatedly condemned for its return to the old Jewish life of the *shtetl*, and for its failure to frame the work, or indeed, the First World War, in class-conscious terms. Menke replied with "The Brave Coward," a literary manifesto, comprising four poems and a "declaration of poetic independence," in prose, protesting the meddling of politics in poetry. The four poems are "About happiness and sadness" (attacking the notion that poets should "deliver happiness; its most famous line is: 'I will not lead my poem—into battle'"); "About yesterday, today and tomorrow" (attacking the notion that poetry must stick to the present); "And you are sad as a thousand Coney Island suns" (proclaiming the artificial happiness of "proletarian poetry" to be the saddest of all); and, finally "Prayer of the drum," on the rainmaker's drum that brings only hail because of the drummer's mood. The poetic potential of true sadness is invoked in the line "Come, O sadness, come O beloved, come." Here is a brief excerpt from the accompanying declaration:

For many years, our poets, more out of pose than sincerity, tacked on proletarian, happy, tails—to moods that have in fact nothing to do with the movement for freedom. How funny! Poets with red, happy





tails!

I attempt in this poem ["The Brave Coward"] to demonstrate, on happiness and sadness, that insincerity must begat: flat, boring, happiness: that even darkness can shine in a true poem; that forced happiness is—madness. And certainly, the uniformity which prevails, alas, so overwhelmingly in our proletarian literature is for sure—madness, for when poets acquire one face to the point where they cannot be told apart, it is just as if a person would suddenly see in the street on every person: one face, his face. That is madness.

It is high time, Mr. Olgin [M. Olgin, editor of the *Frayhayt*], that we learned to tolerate each other—differentiated styles, inclinations and genres, so that our literature might become a rich, deep speaking symphony. For this we would have to open the purest source: honesty.

"The Brave Coward," published in the *Frayhayt* on August 14, 1938, resulted in a barrage of almost daily attacks against Menke and his work in the paper. One of them ridiculed him for writing about his "bobba Toltsa's shrouds," "bobba Tolsta" ('grandmother Toltsa') being the Yiddish equivalent of Aunt Tilly. The lady in question was Menke's grandmother Moyna, whom he never knew (he was in fact named after her). He replied with his fifth book of poetry, *S'hot dos vort mayn boba Moyna* ("Grandmother Moyna takes the Floor"), in which Moyna comes back from nethernetherland to attack the New York communists.

After earning his living as a watchmaker in his early years in America, Menke became a Yiddish teacher in the secular Yiddish school systems run by the *Ordn* organization. He had acquired his own higher education at Columbia University, Brooklyn College, and, uniquely among Yiddish writers, at both the Jewish Workers' University and the Jewish Theological Seminary, where he immersed himself in Kabbalah, or Jewish mysticism, much of it in Aramaic.

During the 1940s, he published two more Yiddish books, and coedited a short-lived journal, *Mir* ("We"), which campaigned for a modern Yiddish literature free of political strings.

When news was confirmed of Stalin's shooting of the great Soviet Yiddish writers in 1952, Menke abandoned left-wing Yiddish circles, and broke off relations with friends who continued to support Stalin. He was cheerfully accepted by the non-leftist Yiddish school systems where he resumed his career as a Yiddish teacher. Things were different in the world of Yiddish literature. Nobody would publish a *gevézener* ("former fellow traveller"), even one who had fought against communism from within leftist circles. He managed to publish his eighth book, *Inmitn tog* ("At Midday") in 1954. In his 1956 review of the book, Issac Bashevis Singer comments on the poem "A prayer," which begins with the line "O, how I want to go under":

This mood is understandable when one bears in mind that Menke Katz saw all there is to see among the communists and underwent the difficult process of tearing oneself away from an environment, colleagues, maybe also a job. As it happens, the whole book is very optimistic, but this poem reveals a genuine mood.

To escape the depression, and to return to his usual euphoric self, full of love for life and friends and poetry, Menke went off to spend three years in Israel, from 1954 to 1956, and from 1959 to 1960, with his second wife, Brooklyn artist and teacher Rivka (Ruth) Feldman, whom he married in 1950, and lived with the rest of his life. They had one son (myself).

In Israel, Menke lived in Safad, home of sixteenth century kabbalism, where he immersed himself in Kabbalah and—started to write in English for the first time since that boyhood encounter in the East Broadway library with Abba Shtoltzenberg.

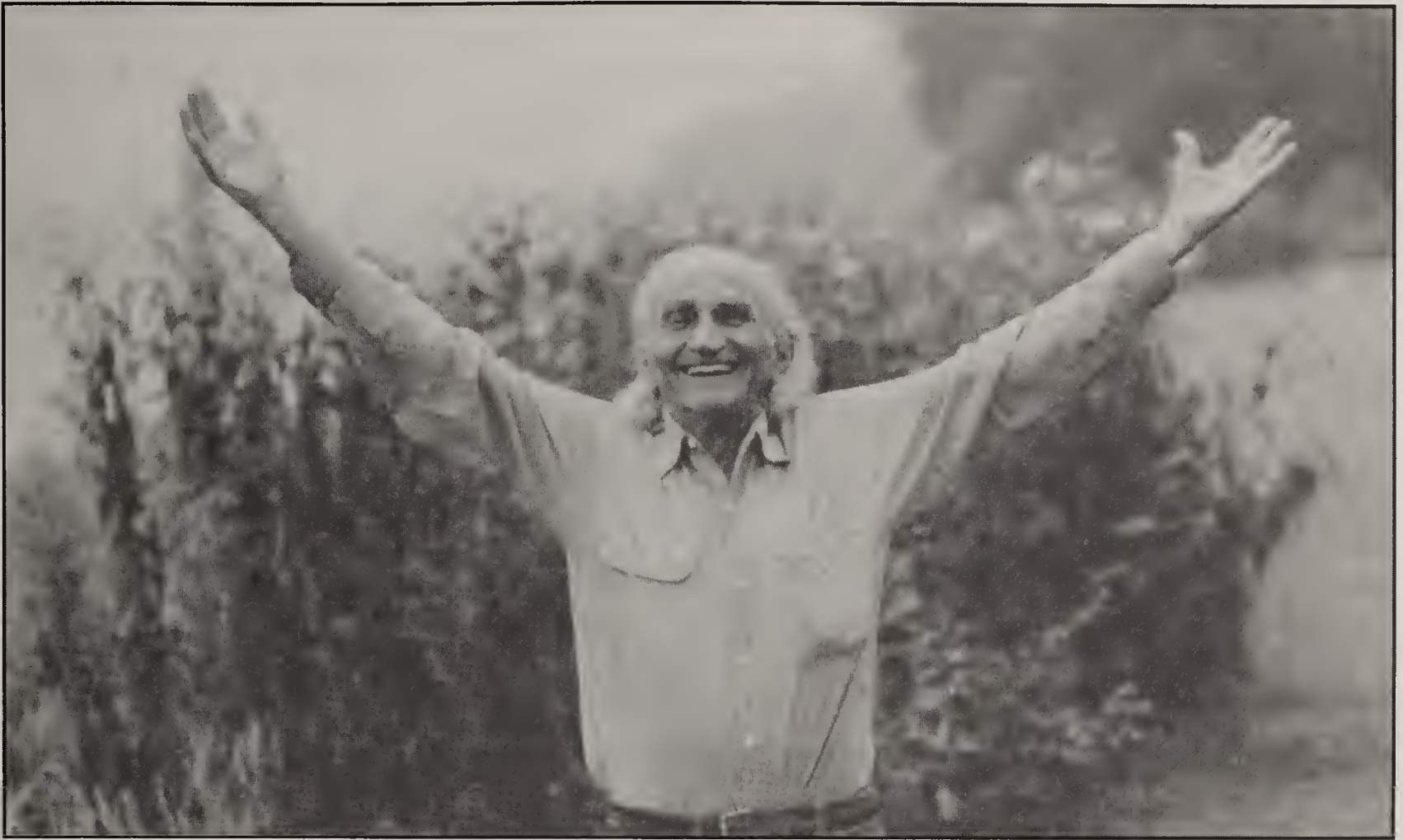
Life in Israel went sour over the issue of Yiddish, which at the time was the object of an official hate campaign (it was, for example, illegal to publish a daily Yiddish newspaper). Menke, who earned his bread in

Safad as a Hebrew teacher, was constantly having to argue to defend his decision to speak only Yiddish to his son. The final straw came shortly before my fourth birthday, when a policeman stopped us on the street, yelled at Menke for speaking Yiddish to his little boy, which he said was illegal. When he took us to the police station, the chief of police of Safad, a good friend, apologized profusely, but that very day Menke said: "We're going to America," and, so it was, back to the apartment in his wife's family house in the Boro Park Section of Brooklyn, where the attic became his poetry haven for many years.

After his return to New York in 1960, his attempts to relaunch a career in Yiddish poetry met with the iron curtain of politics. One incident became a sensation. When the New York literary journal *Tsukunft* sent his poems back, he sent other poems under the pseudonym "Clara Feldman" (his mother-in-law's name). The *Tsukunft* hastened to publish everything sent by "Clara Feldman," announcing to its readers a great literary discovery, until somebody recognized the style. For an author of nine books of poetry (eight published, and the ninth, *Safad*, to appear many years later) to have to resort to pseudonyms to get a poem published was too much. He turned more and more to English, and made his debut with "A Manikin," published in the *Atlantic* in June 1961. His work achieved instant recognition and, in addition to the *Atlantic*, his work began to appear in *Sewanee Review*, *Poet Lore* and the *New York Times*.

In 1962, he launched *Bitterroot*, a quarterly poetry magazine that specialized in discovering new, unknown talent and in inspiring people to poetry. His first English book, *Land of Manna*, named after the kabbalistic heaven the Mishálishkek break-in team had decided on, appeared in 1965. His second was *Rockrose* (1970), a survey of the New York metropolis. He followed with an English *Burning Village* (1972) which deals with the events of the two-volume Yiddish work of the same name, but is by no means a translation, and Menke regretted not calling it *Bread of Famine*. His other books in English are *Forever and ever and a Wednesday* (folktales from Michálishkek, 1980), *A Chair for Elijah* (1985) and *Nearby Eden* (1990). Two volumes called *Two*





Menke Katz in the late 1980s. Courtesy of Ruth Katz.

*Friends* (1981), and *Two Friends II* (1988), comprise poems by Menke and his closest friend, poet Harry Smith, on facing pages, on coordinated subjects. All but one of Menke's English works were published by The Smith Press.

In English, Menke became known as an innovator in poetic form. His two favorites were the *Menke sonnet* and the *Menke Chant Royal*. He also led a battle against rhyme in modern poetry, launched by his "A Word or Two against Rhyme," which led to publication of a *Poet Lore* symposium on the subject in 1967. His English works won the Benet Award twice, were nominated for Pulitzers twice, and were translated into over thirty languages, including Shona (South Africa), Kannada (India) and Ibo (Nigeria). No mean achievements for a poet writing in a second language.

In 1978, the poet and his wife left Brooklyn for a forest house in Spring Glen, New York, in the Shawangunk mountains, the foothills of the Catskills. He traveled frequently to lecture

and give poetry workshops at American and Canadian universities, and pioneered poetry as therapy in a number of prisons.

**H**e was a lifelong devotee of Yiddish folksongs, most of which he learned in Michálishek. As a boy, he had learned to play the mandolin with a broken mandolin discarded by a German soldier. At poetry evenings, when teaching, among friends, he would always "give a few songs." He compiled a collection of Yiddish folksongs, many of them unknown, for Oxford University's summer program in Yiddish, in 1985. It is hoped the book will appear in print soon.

In the spring of 1991, Menke Katz, in apparent perfect health, celebrated his eighty-fifth birthday with Harry Smith, myself, and a few dear friends. He had sent issue no. 100 of *Bitterroot* to the printers.

After a dream in which his mother complained of his writing so much in English, he had spent the previous few months writing new Yiddish poems, all in the form of the Menke sonnet; these have now been included in a collection of his Yiddish sonnets, *Menke Sonetn*, published by The Smith in 1992.

On the evening of April 23rd, 1991, Menke welcomed some friends with his usual exuberance, and entertained them with Yiddish folksongs over *l'chaims* (drinks), and—a discussion about the essence of writing poetry. "When I write a poem, I am not conscious of Yiddish or English, I am so ecstatic I have an orgasm, so high do you have to feel to write true poetry." Next day, he took an afternoon nap, and died.

*Dovid Katz, who wrote this essay in 1992, currently lives in Vilnius, Lithuania.*



### A Yiddish Poet

I am a Yiddish poet—a doomed troubadour,  
a dreamsmith jeered by the soft-voiced yokel,  
the smooth snob with the swinging lash shrieking: jargon!  
O are the mocked tears of my people a jargon?

Yiddish,  
formed as Adam of the dust of the four corners of the earth;  
the quenchless blaze of the wandering Jew,  
the thirst of the deserts.

My mother tongue is unpolished as a wound, a laughter,  
a love-starved kiss,  
yearnful as a martyr's last glance at a passing bird.  
Taste a word, cursed and merciless as an earthquake.  
Hear a word, terse and bruised as a tear.  
See a word, light and lucent, joyrapt as a ray.  
Climb a word—rough and powerful as a crag.  
Ride a word—free and rimeless as a tempest.

Yiddish,  
The bare curse thrown against the might of pitiless foes.  
A "black year" shrouding dawn after a massacre.  
The mute call of each speechless mouth of Treblinka.  
The prayer of stone to turn into gale.

*From:*  
*Land of Manna*

### A Chair for Elijah

Solitude is God.  
Let us hide in seven  
heavens, at our forest house.  
Only God and the beggar  
Elijah are welcome guests.

We leave a chair for  
Elijah who comes to us  
to rest, weary from  
his wanders, leaving at dusk  
on a chariot of fire.

At dusk we see God  
on our windowpanes as an  
alchemist who turns  
the gold of the dying day  
into dream: a cosmos for two.

*From: Chair for Elijah*

# Six poems

by

# Menke Katz

### Hymn to the Potato

O my first hymn was to the potato,  
lure of my childhood, fruit of the humble,  
the diurnal festival of the poor.

No fruit is noble as the potato.  
Cherries are coy, plums have hearts of true stone.  
The wind is a drunk fiddler at the grape.

The potato knows how much light there is  
in the fertile darkness of seeded earth,  
kissing the dust to which Adam returned.

On the hungry alleys of my childhood,  
the Milky Way was a potato land.

*From: Rockrose*





## *an international magazine of poetry*

*Appears Three Times A Year*

*Logo of publication founded and edited by Menke Katz.*

### **At a Patched Window**

I am a lover, a pauper, and a poet.  
My heart is clean beneath the threadbare shirt.  
I learned wisdom from the Talmudic skies of Lithuania.  
I am gracefully uncouth.  
I cleaved my grace from the slums of New York.

My father like Columbus dreamed of America, when I was born.  
My childhood waned at a patched window,  
where I imagined a cake soaring like a cherub,  
where I saw candy, toys, and cocoa,  
under the wings of a nymph only.

The cruel hand of destiny led us through hunger, war and plague.  
We were four little brothers and a scrawny sister.  
In the autumn garret we heard the song of Spring,  
as crawling doves would hear the giggle of their craven victor.  
The wind through redolent meadows was a bleak laughter.

O our weary mother carried us  
through the prosperous thorns of our scared little town, Michalishek,  
From a fairy tale came the night—a spectral undertaker,  
to bury the thorny day of Lithuania.  
God was the baker from Eden who baked the tasty stars.

*From: Land of Manna*

### **Isaiah on Freedom**

Isaiah is always there  
where builders build a new jail.  
He says: Alas, my grim sons,  
the sword is still not a plow.  
If one image of God will  
be somewhere chained in a cell  
the chain will shackle us all,  
in heaven and on earth.  
Angels will know the weight of  
the chain, winds will not be free  
to curse even their own fate.  
The sky will be an endless  
prison roof if one captive  
will still remain in a cell,  
at the end of time, nearby.

*From: Rockrose*

### **Nocturnal**

Any speck of dust knows:  
in every newborn child  
there is a first look  
at the last sundown.

In the darkness of the blind  
there is a hidden daybreak  
which only the blind can see.

At a first handshake,  
someone waves farewell.  
Any speck of dust knows.

Envoi

My son,  
I heard your first laughter.  
Who will see your last tear?

*From: Nearby Eden*



## Goldenrod

Late summer. Goldenrod joins the desperadoes of the fields:  
 briars, spines, wild roses, the thorn gangs which scratched the blush out  
 of the dolled-up violets. Mermaids meet them in the  
 mirrors of brooks, dusk bogs, deserted ponds; carefree  
 vagrants, they roam through forbidden soils until  
 the frost bends their bare rods into hoary  
 rainbows, until they moan and rattle  
 in the wind like phantom fiddlers  
 on their way to the ghostland.  
 Goldenrod, flower of  
 the wretched, of the  
 fallen angels,  
 the flag of  
 the cursed.

*From: Chair for Elijah*

## Praise to Our Faults

Praise ye the Lord for each of our  
     blessed faults,  
 with psaltery and dance, with flesh  
     and bone:  
 the prankish shades which save us  
     from the scorching sun.  
 A pygmy without faults is a giant  
     fault.  
 Perfect is the boredom of the half-  
     witted crone.  
 Faultless is the false-eyed rose which  
     cannot fade,  
 the synthetic heart, the soul hand-  
     made.  
 The tiniest worm like the sunrise is  
     genuine.  
 Authentic is the shadow of a blade  
     of grass.  
 Dreams are real  
 as the reflections of nighthawks  
     which pass  
 in the spring, northward, over a  
     moonlit lake.

*From: Land of Manna*

# Poems by Menke Katz

## White Little Goat

*(New Chant Royal)*

The house  
 is wondrous  
 as the woods where  
 it was born where trees  
 wounded by the axe cry  
 havoc, bleed like humans. The  
 earthen floor is scented with June,  
 recondite with the seven leaves of  
 the dogrose. Mother Badane hears the  
 brook rocking like a cradle, chanting of a  
 white little goat bringing raisins, almonds, good luck.

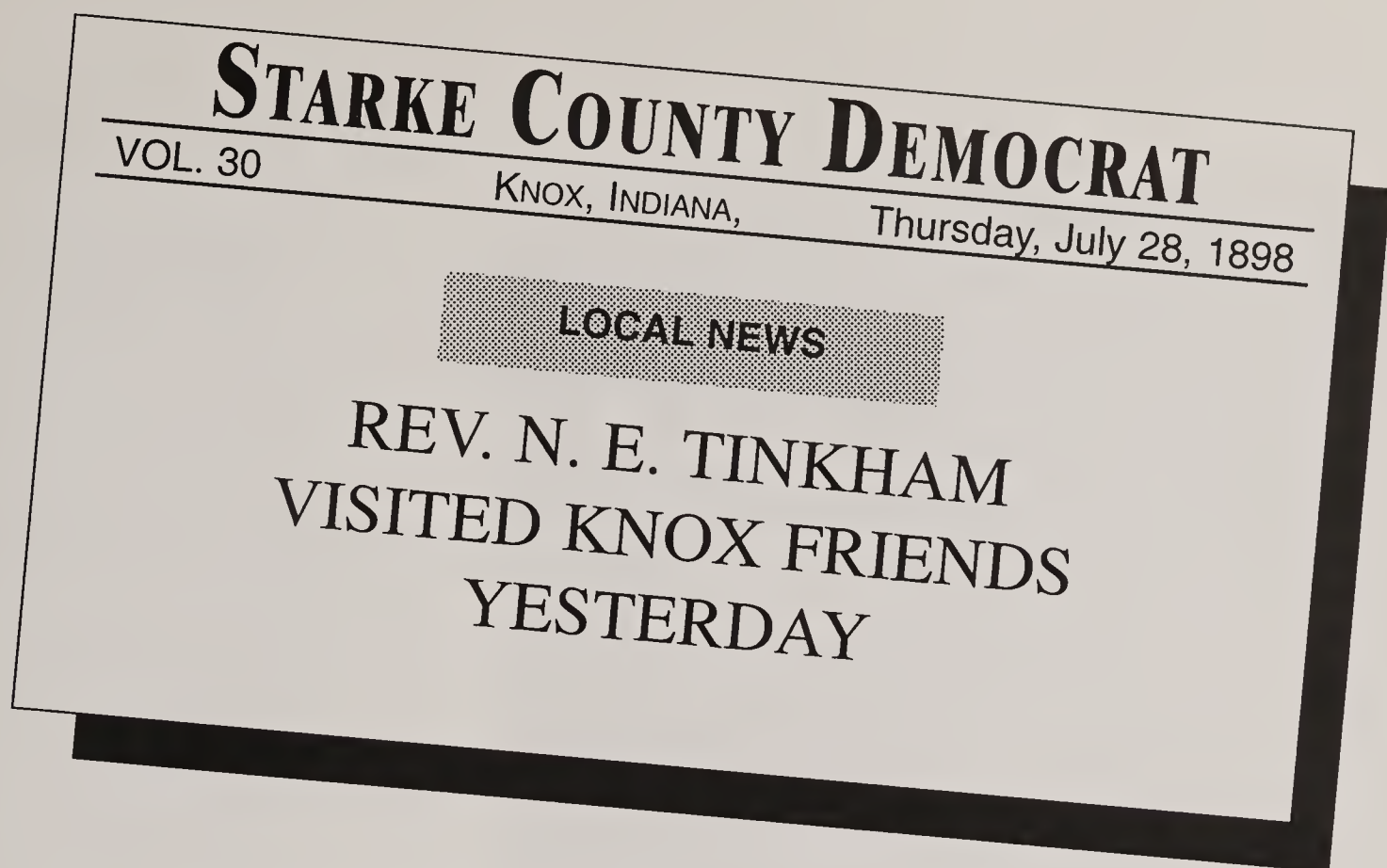
Here is  
 grandfather's  
 wainscot chair, the  
 panels sunk, the posts  
 turned, the carved white stork with  
 a child in its red beak, on  
 its way to a barren woman,  
 the wings chopped in flight, left whole is a  
 quill to write the grim fate of its voyage.  
 The effaced designs still show signs they were once  
 lordly oak, the hurt bark aches even after death.

Envoy

The house on the bank of the river is like a  
 dreamboat, waiting here ages to tide across  
 the Viliya, to return to its trees,  
 to the nearby, dark forest. The winds  
 echo with the hopeful steps of  
 Messiah, calling the dead  
 to rise, to sail to the  
 Eden of Edens:  
 America!  
 Ha! A! Me!  
 Ri! Ca!

*From: Burning Village*





the calling

for

Nathan Tinkham

it was a late  
October day  
in a woods  
of shagbark hickory  
and water fern  
and thick  
tangled vines

it had rained  
the world was wet  
and floating green  
somewhere  
a lone bird chirped  
the woods were filled  
with complex  
lights and words  
of sunset—  
grays and lucid lavenders  
and deep crimsons

and a shining  
as of diamonds  
in the bole  
of a hickory  
that stood  
statuesque  
before the young man  
fixed his attention

there was a sharp crackling  
of twigs  
a wind came up  
and browsed  
on the leaves  
still shiny wet  
with autumn rain

the young man  
stood stunned still—  
a sea of blood rocking  
within him—

the Voice came,  
slow and deep  
as mysteries:  
“You are One  
to speak my Word”

— Charles B. Tinkham  
Gary, Indiana



Photographs on these facing pages by Cathy Michniewicz.

## On Hearing the News

When the test came back negative, at first he thought *what flimsy universe is this that has no tolling bell announcing tragedy, no drumroll when you're spared inglorious defeat*, but then he felt he needed to do something grand, quit work, go everywhere at once, including places he had lived in years before and fled; or see old friends, although they never wrote; old battlefields in Nam, where he had fought and bled; at least New York, which he had never visited (although he loved the song,) but when he toted up the cost, this place and that, he couldn't leave LA, which wasn't bad, with so much to see and do, and then he thought a ticket to a play and dinner just for him, but that would set him back a hundred bucks or more and he'd just spent a fortune on the cats, yet knew some celebration was in order here, and bought a jar of moonshine from the guy next door and rented *Sound of Music* for his VCR.

— Earl Coleman  
Montville, New Jersey

## After the Eclipse

To the West under hammered clouds  
laminated bands of sundry colors  
bled out and merged into a sudden  
violet-hued hooding of the Earth

She passed, not ten yards distant  
then stopped as if she'd walked  
into a wall. I meant to speak  
but her hazel eyes altered my world

In a heartbeat and I was struck dumb  
suddenly aware that all of life had led  
only to that evanescent moment  
that all after led nowhere at all

— Robert Hillebrand  
Oconomowoc, Wisconsin

## Passage Into Womanhood

I later learned the reason  
My sister wouldn't play.  
Almost three years older, she was privy  
To those five to seven days of slack  
That I hadn't reached yet,  
That I knew nothing of,

and I kept picking at her to play.

Rigid, like one condemned,  
She sat in a slatted kitchen chair  
Just inside the door  
And near the wood stove,  
Close to the warmth  
Where Mama was cooking,

and I kept picking at her to play.

I suppose I was told to stop  
By her, by Mama;  
I don't remember.  
I only remember Mama speaking to my sister  
As one woman to another,  
"If you'll slap her, she'll leave you alone."

— Nancy King  
Jacksonville, North Carolina



## Big Dance

Weeks filled with anticipation,  
reservations, pink carnation  
now the final preparation

A wall clock's tock causes perspiration  
a phone call made in desperation  
no one home at this location

A gown wrinkled, rankled in frustration  
flees up stairs in teen humiliation  
what solace, comfort, consolation  
will dispel my darling daughter's devastation?

— Jeff Manes  
Lowell, Indiana

## The Year We Rang In

—for my grandmother

Maybe five years a stay-at-home by then,  
a young woman with enough pills  
for two in the pocket, a sadness  
that could check the sea.

Nana wants to watch Lawrence Welk,  
the usual for her Saturday night, why not,  
so it's New Year's?  
There will be others.

But tonight, it is just the two of us,  
flesh and blood, cold comfort shared,  
things we will do that are remembered  
long after she is gone.

It was she who said, *get a pan and a spoon*,  
when the ball descended in New York.  
She, who opened the front door to the coal sky,  
banging the spuds pan. And then I,

banging and banging and banging,  
forgetting how lonely, how inextricably  
bound by the 'Irish mood' we were,  
beating the call on this cold drum.

— Kathleen M. McCann  
Elsberry, Missouri

## A Question of Balance

for Karen Boyd

Growing up in a San Jose suburb  
where girls were scorned long  
before womanhood and boys  
hogged the basketball courts,  
there was one playground piece  
that was too often ignored:  
the four-inch balancing beam.  
The ground below it was chronic  
with mud. The nuns  
would scream if our white shirts  
and salt and pepper pants  
resembled potato gravy.

But one girl didn't seethe in silence  
or fink us over to the nuns.  
She risked her blue plaid skirt  
over that pig puddle, setting  
the stage for Nadia or Olga  
or some other gymnast.  
And over the years I wondered  
what this question of balance  
was all about, and I believe,  
if nothing else, she is one,  
graceful, corporate raider today.

— Mike Catalano  
Santa Cruz, California



## In the Hnang Valley

I came with a theory  
that ran around in my head  
like an urchin,  
rattling the cages of my lips,  
almost screeching to be heard.

But it had to wait its turn  
while the farmer and his family  
slowly spread their wheat  
out in the sun to dry,  
strand after strand after strand,  
like sheet music  
for the uncollected melodies they hummed,  
their profiles tagged with  
droplets of solid gold  
as they arched their backs  
towards their soil.

My revelation danced  
with my fingers in my pockets  
or was kicked into a pebble  
down a hundred yards or so  
of the trunk road.

These ones who had no clue  
where the ideas came from  
rode back and forth, back and forth,  
on rickety bicycles,  
across the wheat,  
their wheels breaking down the harvest  
into husks and grain.

They slept in the afternoons,  
snores thickening like clouds,  
bicycles abandoned,  
streets empty of activity,  
even dogless.  
In the absence of my audience,  
what I knew navigated the silence  
like flat sails.

In the twilight,  
they returned to their working feast,  
to sort the crop one last time,  
tossing spadefuls of the season  
up into the air  
to find and bless the breeze.

— John Grey  
Providence, Rhode Island

## They Are Not Gods

My wife has drowned our two children...  
I have heard this gossip coming  
from our village.

I dig in this hill, far from home, with other  
men from my village; many of them  
are dying...

These white beasts, who force us to labor  
like this, are not gods, although we first  
thought they were...

My strength is leaving my body,  
and I fear I cannot continue  
in this world.

The other men dying here with me  
in this cave understand why my wife  
killed our babies

but they will not speak of it...  
we try not to talk of our lives  
before the white beasts,

for to speak these words  
is to ache.

— Ward Kelley  
Greencastle, Indiana

### *Artist's note:*

*Bartolomé de las Casas (c. 1500) was a young Spanish priest who arrived with Columbus in Cuba in 1508, and wrote a journal about the conquest of the region and the decimation of the Taino peoples. Modern historians write that such a cataclysmic mortality rate was due to the introduction of European diseases, the importation of black slaves, with Spanish brutality and enslavement of the tribes. In their own language, the word Taino means "the gentle, good people."*





## Big C little A

by Earl Coleman



he's asking me to be a party to her con. It does a number on my head. She says this latest test has shown he has the cancer

we suspected, not only in his prostate which preliminary tests had mooted as a possibility, but now his bones, though in the early stages only up to here. She says she's calling me from home, she hasn't told him yet, nor is she going to, my father, staying behind in their shop at eight o'clock, plugging away, making *tchatchkes* from beads. Whatever my relationship with him, the shock of this invades my bones, the pit of my stomach. Always headed for disaster, the cancer of his life has done him in at last. Like a sub-theme as we're talking I'm thinking of my own, my life. Am I enjoying it? While there is time?

I can see myself in his shoes, mystified, as pain from nowhere probes deeper and deeper at his gut. What's happening, he'll ask without a clue. Impatient with his body failing him as life has failed. For reasons too obscure to him to understand. They'd have to dope him up. How would he work? It was the only thing he had, his pride in his new work he'd learned to do. Me too, in mine. *C'mon, mom, he'll know soon enough—no? It's not like it will hide itself.*

*But not right now, you hear, not now. Don't breathe a word, versteh? Too much to do, I don't need him a nervous wreck, useless enough already. I came home early just to go through all the papers that he keeps in closets, rubber bands, in drawers, the cupboard. Nothing is in order, insurance, leases, bills, new inventory, what? Like a pig sty. Everything piled in together that I'm sure he couldn't tell you what is what. Doctor Moskowitz says why let him know, it's what they do now, tell the patient nothing, they get too confused. Anyway, what would I say, the words to tell this man I've lived with since*

*I'm twenty-one. He's got ten months? He's got a cancer that is eating him?*

Could she use any but the bitter words she knew? The *choroset* of her life lay on her plate. *But you don't have to say it mom. I'll say. I just told you that. I'll be the one to say.*

*You? And you'll know what to say? My big-shot writer son, published in six little magazines? A maven in the saying department, like always? You say hello and right away you're in a fight.*

Why am I in this argument to set myself up as the bearer of bad news? My life is in a mess too large to manage in the best of circumstances. I plunge on anyway. *It's not right mom, poor guy. To keep it from him? He doesn't have a right to know?*

*Not right? I'll tell you what's not right. A son who maybe calls up once a week. Not right? And you'll know what to say? To tell him bubermeisers, what? It's story-telling time? You think because you know to write you know the words?*

I find myself propelled before I can think twice. The guilt she's laid on me? Pop's sentencing to death? *This Sunday? You'll be in the shop?* It costs to say that. Sunday time is precious time for me. But now the question's floated. How can I not? What troubles can I have as grave as this?

*Of course the shop. Where would we be? Miami on the beach? A thing like this it takes for you to pay a visit on a Sunday afternoon? It shouldn't happen to my enemies. The last time what, three weeks ago? You're sure you're not too busy with the book you're writing now for seven years, ten thousand*

*pages you should have? You're writing in it what it means to be a son? You'll find the time to visit him, he's dying now?*

*I just said I would mom. I don't loaf, you know. I work hard to cover the rent. I pay dearly for the little writing time I get. I said I'll find the time to come.*

*You look, of course you'll find. I'll make stuffed cabbage and some latkes. For my son, he shouldn't forget his mother's still alive.*

\* \* \*

The neighborhood's done nothing but go downhill. Their store is on the wrong side of the Boulevard. How does that happen, this side bad, that side good? The choice of a store's location is always critical, the variables that have to be weighed complex, but perhaps the answer in this case is simple: just another calamitous entry for the rap sheet of his life's mistakes. The way he'd gone for Norcross over Hallmark for instance. Why? The world is hooked on Hallmark, which was on to something way back when, that people were already forgetting all their words, forgetting how to say Congratulations on your job, your new baby, your engagement, I love you pop, and needed cards with someone else's words. Words. And yet something about Hallmark, who knows what, had turned him off. Who ever knew why he made the bad decisions he always made? I walk across the Boulevard to it, a Norcross greeting card shop, maybe 30x100, the window with the necklaces of beads, some of them his, showing themselves off in front, without a passerby to notice them, on the wrong side of the





Boulevard.

*Hi, mom. I bend to kiss her cheek. She's gained some weight, but not as in good health, more like someone who's let go, not worth the struggle any more.*

*So what do you think? Too cluttered if I put this rack of bracelets here, the mirror too? Too much? She pushes the mirror on its stand across the narrow counter, a little closer toward me.*

*What had I expected? Hugs and kisses? How are you? How's things? Looks good. He's in the back?*

*The shipment from Corot came Friday. Some new designs. Mostly plastic. Glass is too expensive now. He's working with the new merchandise.*

*What are you telling me, mom? You had to nail it down to get it right. She's a Delphic oracle. One of the witches in Macbeth. I shouldn't bother him?*

*To bother him? How can you bother him, a son? If you fight, of course you'll bother him.*

*So how's he feeling?  
You'll ask, he'll tell.*

What can I bring to words? How do I have the balls to write when I learn nothing, do the same thing every time, walk up to the front door, ring the bell, high hopes, my heartbeat strong, some new thing's going to happen here, there'll be a smile, the years and history will melt away. We'll start from scratch. Better, we won't have to make the same mistakes, the suffering of the past put by. But then the door is opened up a crack and it's the same old, same old. Did I learn something from the last time? Of course not. But I try again. Who knows? Perhaps there'll be a change *this* time. Who said things can't turn out right? Perhaps they will.

My delusion, like all pessimistic optimists, is that we are perfectible, can change, perhaps improve. It doesn't matter that we're disappointed much more often than not, everything in stasis, like a fish egg trapped in amber for millennia at the bottom of the Caspian. So where were my words now? Hung up, because of her resistance? Only that? The words resisted me as matters stood, just facing my PC. Seven years! She wasn't wrong. *Listen, mom. On the phone you said you'd have a problem putting everything in shape, his records, leases for the store, the apartment. I'm not terribly good at record keeping, but when we go to the house maybe I can help. Where would I find the time?*

*What are you good at? Writing books nobody wants? Your kind of help I don't need, I'd have to recheck everything anyway, bad as your father. That you learned from him. To get married, have a family so we could have some grandkids, that you didn't. I'll manage. Hah, I always manage. Right?*

Even rams get tired butting at the same hard stump. *Of course right, mom. You're always right.*

She looks at me quizzically for a second, her thin nose sniffing for a whiff of disapproval, irony, her sharp eyes in some quick glance into mine that will display my heart to her, not certain of my tone of voice. *We'll close this afternoon a little early in honor of your schlepping all the way to Queens, had to be at least a half an hour on the subway, no?*

Sometimes it takes more than words, or good intentions. What good were words to chew on, when she'd been eating herself up for more than thirty years? *Good idea to close early, mom. I'll go back and see how he's doing.*

They keep the rear of the store dark, trying to save on the electric bill, costs so high. Even now, with summer almost on us, this part of the store is always dim. I pull aside a remnant yard of black cloth my father has put up to get some privacy. Not bad con-

struction for an amateur carpenter. An amateur at everything. At life. He's so concentrated on the beads in hand he doesn't realize I'm here. I clear my throat. *Hi, pop. Terrific display, fronting the street. How are you? How do you feel?* He glances up but immediately returns to the necklace he's on the verge of finishing, as if he's being paid for a quota and daren't turn from work. He looks dreadful, tired, worn.

*You like the window? I changed it yesterday again. Could have had a career as one of those window dressers, except I've always liked women. I'm getting good at it. Can you believe we're moving everything I make? With my own hands. These hands.* He holds his stubby fingers out. They are no longer as plump as they'd been, nor is he. It's heart-wrenching to see him like this, looking like he's trying on a skin one size too large. *Can't keep up with the demand, Gabe. Wish I had an extra pair.* He lifts his hands up to his eyes, studies them.

*I'd offer you mine, pop, but it would take too long to teach me, I'm such a klutz. Besides I've got to finish my book.*

He nods, not so much sagely as in a way I take as mildly deprecating, and I read in his pursed thin lips that they talk about me often, not about my writing but that I'm a writer, why I don't visit oftener. His hands have not stopped stringing beads. *The book. It's going well, the book? You told me but I forget what it's about.*

*Family, pop. Relationships.*

*Family. Relationships.* He concentrates on the beads. He shoots a quick glance at me. *About us?*

*You asked the same thing last time, pop. Remember? It's not exactly about us but of course some of it's the way, the kind of way we are with each other. A writer's got to try to be particular and universal at the same time.*





*Particular and universal. Hoo-hah. And the mother in the book? She's your mother, Rose?*

*Some. Not much. On the other hand a lot.*

*And me? You've got a father in the book?*

*Quite different.*

*Your father's not a failure in the book?*

I tell myself it's the reason I don't visit more. Too painful. On the other hand I can't let myself off that easily. I don't come because it's dull here, stagnant, dead, and it's my work that drives my life. Old grievances rehashed endlessly could never yield a payoff without some new perspective, and who was going to supply it? No one here. But was I living life to purpose, meaningful? Unlike theirs? Just the writing? It was enough? *Why a failure, pop? What kind of thing is that to say? You've worked your ass off from the time you were a kid. I don't remember that you loafed, paid no attention to responsibility.*

*But the truth is, Gabe, as your mother reminds me always, what do I have to show for it, the work? So I can point to my big success, that I'm turning out twenty items a week. The truth is I'm maybe getting piece-work wages if you add it all up. If you look at it that way I could maybe buy them cheaper, you know what I'm saying?*

*Pop. You've had no training at it, nothing. You're winging it.*

*Winging it? Hah. I like it. Winging it. The words you know. My hands. These hands. He holds them out again. In the book you make him a success?*

Strange that he's the one I have the fights with. Over what? I get the feeling that we're arguing about her, not anything between the two of us. Fighting over crumbs of love she might dole out if she had any left. Knowing

what I know I feel guilty for all my put-downs, all my anger, my resentment at our living poor, dirt poor, saving two cents on a meal, poor every minute of the day. *You haven't answered me, pop. How do you feel?*

*What's with how I feel? His fingers work away. You're a writer not a doctor. Tired. I feel tired. They give me something for it. Vitamins, your mother says, some medicine. I'll be O.K. As long as I can turn these items out. I take it home with me sometimes, the work. The hours fly away. Better than the stupid cop shows on the television. You still got your girl friend, Ruth?* I nod. *This one seems to stay. That's good. Not in and out like the others. She'd like this pair of earrings? Here.* I accept them and put them in my pocket although Ruth never wears costume jewelry. *I can't keep up with the demand. Two years ago I learned to string. Customers tell customers. Can you believe?* He pinches a clasp on the completed necklace, looks at it under his gooseneck lamp, shakes his head in wonder, raises his thin eyebrows. *Like that. I start with beads and string, a clasp. A style in mind. Here's this!* He holds the necklace up to catch the light as if he's Fabergé, just finished with an egg. *You like?*

Little different from my work. I start with a lined yellow pad and a pencil. An unformulated idea of beginning, middle, end. A style. Some unfleshed notion around characters I could construct. And then—here's this! Whatever time it took. One of the reasons why I'd stayed with Ruth so long. She let me be. She understood. Although why she stays with me I couldn't understand. The hours flew. Would I have earned piece-work wages if I added it all up?

*I like it, pop. Good work. You look a little done in. I think you've clocked too many hours at it without a break. Mom's ready to quit early anyway. Tomorrow is another day as Scarlett said.*

*Scarlett's a person? The things you know.*

Each time I visit I cringe with memory of growing up here, as though I'm held and bound, no longer safely moved away, with my own life, such as it is. The walls, empty of art, carry two photographs, one of me, about fourteen years ago, one of the two of them getting married in their Depression clothes. The couch's cloth I'm sitting on is shredded. The rooms are dark. The bed in their bedroom has a valley. The smell is not even one of rout, a massacre, but the stink of the defeat of attrition, of siege, of a dispirited force fighting in a battle foredoomed. I'm suddenly afraid I haven't done this feeling justice in my book, the smallness of their desperate struggle just for crumbs, and the heroic stature of totality of loss, the two of them run of the same mine as bituminous. In what way are they different from Lear? Because he's King? I picture my father forced to that bed and dying in it on the lumpy mattress, unless he spent his last days, weeks, months, dying in a hospital. I try to collect myself, go past the vast depression that's overtaking me.

My father's at the dining room table, starting a new piece, working against the clock. My mother's in the kitchen preparing supper. I think to offer her a hand, think better of it, and sit where I am as if to keep him company although he's not acknowledging it, perhaps is unaware. Poor guy. What's to say, with all my words?

As if privy to my thoughts my mother calls in *Is the maid supposed to cook and set the table too?*

*I was just about to do that, mom.*

\* \* \*

I know she doesn't like to use the good set just for us, though I'm not sure they entertain a lot. She scolds, whichever one I do. I think she scolds on whim. I put out the

\* \* \*





every-day dishes and utensils. I consider breaking open a packet of paper napkins, but try to read her mind—as if I ever could. I decide she'd want the cloth ones, so I get them from the drawer. I've guessed right since there's no objection when she peers in to check if everything's to her sense of order and orderliness.

The smells of cabbage and *latkes* are familiar. And yet I take no pleasure in them. Instead I'm saturated by the permanence of things, the unforgiving anger which she carries everywhere, the steel I have to wear to have another meal with them. I tell myself some day I'll understand that there is nothing to be done. That we're the folks we are.

But when we're seated, napkins tucked, and start to eat, tears come to my eyes. I blot them away with my napkin. It tastes so good, this meal. It does!

I study them. They've lived together forty years, when, like the neighborhood, their lives went nowhere else but down. And me? I couldn't keep a permanent relationship for twenty months until Ruth. What was it that was wrong with me? The price my art exacted? Bull shit.

We make believe that we're not watching him, although we are, like two detectives looking for some telltale twitch. *You're sending out*, she asks?

*I haven't been writing short stories lately mom. Too wrapped up in my book.*

*Wrapped up? Imagine that. Wrapped up. You live a life?*

*C'mon mom, of course I live a life. You know I'm still with Ruth.*

*She's what? A leper? You don't take her out in public? Don't bring her here? Not that you come yourself so much.*

*You just saw her at our seder, mom.*

*Look at that. I forgot. I should remember such a rare occasion.*

Is this exchange meant to fill in time while we are watching him, the sudden look that has come over him, surprise, discomfort, what? Perhaps it's distaste. How can that be when this favorite meal of ours tastes so good? We're silent now, my mother and I, but we're uneasy, seeming to be studying our plates as if they hold some answers to unspoken questions, words or lack of them. Then suddenly my father stops eating, his fork raised to his lips. *I don't feel too good* he says, pushing his plate away, the corners of his mouth turned down.

Already it's begun. Good Lord.

*You're fine, you're fine*, she responds quickly, too quickly. *A little gas. What else?*

But he's not eating, face gone ashen with a look of pain. And we are locked in silence like a vow, the two of us knowing what we know, unable to move the moment forward, break the iron rock of circumstance. I push my plate away as well. Damn! I'm tired of this shit, restraining orders like a judge, words hanging overhead like Sword of Damocles, secrets to protect, or use like weapons in the darkness of our night.

And suddenly a light goes off in my head. What happened to free will? Of course we're prisoners of our selves, the way we are—where's the news in that? But circumstance? What makes us bound by circumstance? It isn't possible to change ourselves, true enough. But one small circumstance?! Of course we can! Shit doesn't happen. We happen. We make things change, or don't. Who am I waiting for to change what must be changed? Someone *else*? Well that won't happen, will it?

*Pop*, I say, before I change my mind, muffle myself in fear of her, *there's something that*

*you need to know.*

She glares at me as if to strike me dead. *Listen* she begins, looking at him.

But I go on. *Those tests you had, pop.*

*Yes?*

*They came back positive.*

*Positive? That's good?*

*No, pop. That's bad.*

*So—what? They found what? Something?* But he knew. The pain on his face said everything.

*You've got prostate cancer, pop. It may have spread.* His face is stricken. I go on. *I'm so sorry, pop.* The tears well up into my eyes again. I leave them there.

*Cancer? Big C? They're sure? How can they be sure?* He looks at her for recognition, solace or denial, what?

*They're sure*, she says. She can't look at him.

He grapples for a handle on it, lost. He looks at me. *That's it? This is what, the end?* It almost sounds as if there's some relief, as of some runner in a marathon with just a thousand yards to go, behind the pack, but just to cross the finish line in order to collapse seems great.

*This isn't your last supper, pop.*

*What happens now?*

*You'll fight it, pop.* I manage to keep the panic from my voice. *I'll fight it with you, if*



## Gondoliers

Working the waters,  
father and son stand close,  
connected by a cord of life  
through which song and music flow.  
One heart beats  
because of the other.  
Sinewy arms, blood-rich,  
meld into wooden poles  
that breathe with the human touch  
and spread open at their tips,  
releasing one day's proud legacy  
into the timeless depths  
of the Grand Canal.

— Sandra Goldsmith  
Chicago, Illinois

## Tautology

I'm older now,  
older than ever before,  
and settled with a family,  
a house and a backyard  
but still, I envy my father  
who can come and pick  
a plum or a peach  
from my spring trees  
and savor both the tart  
and the sweet of unripe fruit.

— Giovanni Malito  
Cork, Ireland

## You Played the Rain

You played the rain on your old mandolin.  
A rusted roof laid shelter on my heart.  
Song wove a weather coat out of a cloud.  
The music was as frail as daffodils,  
Against the silent, closing doors of dark.

— Sandra Fowler  
West Columbia, West Virginia

*you want me to. I've been a shit, to stay so far away, so wrapped up in myself. I'm sorry, pop.*

Suddenly he turns. *You knew?* He looks at her, like Brando looks at Steiger, knowing he's betrayed.

She returns his look defiantly, perhaps imperiously. *Of course I knew. And of course I didn't tell. This momser comes to visit once in a blue moon, and has to tell you when I asked him not.*

*Why not, Rose? You knew, Gabe knew, the doctor knew, but me not?*

*What good to know, Sam? You'll have more worries now? What does knowing change? It changes nothing, nothing. And you, Gabe. How dare you tell, when I specifically said not.*

And now he's wrapped up in it, this information, this calamity, shaking his bent head, although he isn't crying out or shrieking Gevalt, just immersed in his misery without words. Would I have taken it so quietly? Life's latest cruelty for good measure?

*You're wrong this time, mom, I say. It*

*changes everything to say things clear. Pop has every right to know about his life. If we don't change things for ourselves who will? There's no one else to help us out. I should have learned it, seen it, years ago, everything kept bottled up in us, not said. I'm glad I have the guts to say it now.*

*What's with the big words, what? You think that lets you off the hook? Like I don't know, your mother, how you're wrapped up in yourself right now. What does it mean that now you say the words out loud? It makes you what, a hero instead of a pisher? You care I have to live with this, take care of him, your father? You care I have a bigger burden with him now? You'll fight it with him? How? I live it with him every day.*

Is that what I'm doing? Getting myself off the hook? I hope it's not, but who can tell. We all delude ourselves. Whatever it is I mean to say I'd better say it clear. He's raised his head. I look into his eyes. *I don't need your forgiveness, pop, for being such a piss-poor son. That would only be for me, not you. But this I promise you—I'll be a son to you. I meant it when I said I'd offer you my hands. Who cares how long it takes to teach a klutz like me? My book will have to wait. I'll be here for you, pop.*

Has he heard me, us? What is he thinking with his eyes closed once again, perhaps in

pain? That he's dying? Angry at her for not telling him, at me for telling him? He opens his eyes. *You will*, he says? His eyes are wet. *Of course you'll be a son. You are a son. It doesn't matter that we fight. I've always loved you, Gabe, and always proud. My son, the writer. Maybe I don't show it, but I am.*

He pauses, closes his eyes. *I knew. I knew something was wrong. I knew. So now I know.*

He looks me full in the face. His eyes are chocolate brown like mine. *What's there to do? I have a choice? Of course go on. What else? It doesn't let you sneak away and say forget it, I won't play that game. There's something we can do to fight?*

*Something, pop. Maybe nothing much, but something.*

*So of course we'll fight. When did I not fight? I'm glad you offered, Gabe. I take you at your word. So after supper you'll have time for me to teach you how I make my costume jewelry? Look at me. He held his hands out. I learned.*

*Earl Coleman lives in Montville, New Jersey.*



## Memorial Day— Only Remember

how to thank you  
stacked bones left on foreign soil  
to bleach in alien suns  
wash idly back and forth  
beneath an unknown sea

how to revere you  
skulls piled high in ashy rain  
at Buchenwald  
ghosts of martyr mothers  
starving for their children

only  
drink in the sunball's fiery beauty  
listen to warm raindrops singing

only  
tell our stories  
remember us

— Joanne Kennedy  
Toano, Virginia

## Dark Mountains

For I have seen dark mountains in the sky,  
More Himalayan to the naked eye,  
Than any challenge to our where or why.

Hands clasp to lift the measure of that height,  
The gesture is as fragile as a kite,  
Against the massive, polarizing night.

And yet, my friend, I am content to be,  
A little part of such entirety.  
All space my hands can hold belongs to me.

— Sandra Fowler  
West Columbia, West Virginia

## Live

I build my house  
upon the sand  
and mark the beauty  
of the day.

I smile at waves  
that tease my feet  
which are but flesh  
born to age.

Life may be  
transitory and fleeting  
but love  
is beauty  
in full blossom.

— Andrea Pepler Murray  
Hammond, Indiana

Photograph by Brian Hunter





## toward winter

time falls  
through  
the present, in  
a steady rain

light spirals  
down from branch  
to branch in  
the dying yellow  
leaves, a pathway  
open  
to the sky

silence shines in  
a small circle  
of leaf-mold & ferns—  
a transitive shrine:  
sky worships  
earth, earth  
worships sky

— *Peter Roberts*  
*Mansfield, Ohio*



"Mibres Cliff Dwellings" by Gerald Wheeler

## Questions

What if I am stumbling kitten-like  
over the mountain-hips and shoulder-hills

of a giant, recumbent in his pouching  
topography? What if cities are beard-

stubble, prairie skin, desert psoriasis,  
rivers sweat? What if gravel pits

are acne? What if we are parasites  
in paradise, a rump infestation,

an itch? Do fleas know they're fleas? What happens  
when the giant stretches and scratches? Is this

what people mean by a judgment  
day or resurrection? Are we more

grit inside the oyster or the gravel  
in a shoe? Nascent pearl or pebble?

— *Claudia Burbank*  
*Bernardsville, New Jersey*

## Indigo Sky, Desert Chickens

There is a life  
that breathes the clay-colored dust  
when it blows  
across the dry sea.

There is a life  
that exists for me  
beyond the cool lake breeze  
that taunts my desert dream.

There lies a lust  
deep inside me  
to wake to skies of indigo blue  
and a landscape blend of six yellow hues.

A place where the only skyscrapers  
are the bones of spirit men  
and the only jails created with barbed wire  
to keep the chickens in.

— *Lauren R. Mathews*  
*Hobart, Indiana*

## PICTOGRAPHS

### About the Sea in August

Gleaming aquamarine:  
Canvas sails unfurling,  
Crystal air singing.

### Flight

One goldfinch in a tree  
Over a field of mallow:  
A new kind of flower  
A lovely tree flower  
A flying yellow flower.

### Oak Sapling

All of October—  
Red, orange, maroon,  
Yellow, brown, green—  
Fills nine slender branches.

### Transforming the Light

Tall magenta phlox magnify  
Purple morning glories:  
Purple, deep purple; magenta, deep magenta  
Dawn transcending September.

### April Encounter

A small girl in pink jacket  
Tosses pebbles one by one  
Into the brisk white-capped bay:  
Sea gulls walk round her—  
Tireless friends.

— *Joanne Stokink*  
*Wollaston, Massachusetts*

### The Last Thing I See

The first thing I saw  
when I swam up from anesthesia  
was your face furrowed with worry lines,  
your smile. I felt your hand  
clasp mine, warm below the IV,  
felt your butterfly lips  
touch my forehead.  
Since then mine was the face  
furrowed over yours,  
then you were there again for me.  
Although you say you'd rather not  
tread the path without me,  
I hope you will be  
the last thing I will see.

— *Patricia Wellingham-Jones*  
*Tehama, California*

### Urban Renewal

The city streets reach deep into the soul  
their rumbling sounds rolling over curbstones  
to bully the psyche, swallow children  
and penetrate the deafness of the old.  
Still, the sparrow heralds the daylight,  
sings of fresh mornings, new awakenings  
from a branch beneath a bedroom window  
for city dwellers sleep above the trees.  
In time, aromas of the new day,  
perking coffee and simmering bacon  
overcome the crux of the street rumblings  
and make the subway ride palatable.

— *Neil C. Fitzgerald*  
*South Dartmouth, Massachusetts*







*"Sacred Light" by Patti Holzman of San Luis Obispo, California. Original executed in oil pastels, ink, charcoal pencils and collage measures 10" x 14."*



## Tuscan Jewels

The medieval gate behind us,  
our bus rolls toward dusk;  
passes olive groves, vineyards,  
tree-covered mountains; stops  
in the thickness of a chestnut forest.  
Cypress trees lining our path,  
we walk toward Ristorante Falaciani,  
take our places at banquet tables  
where chianti and pinot grigio freely flow,  
loosening our cramped muscles.

A man named Luigi strolls among us,  
singing Al Di La to accordion music.  
Microphone in one hand,  
he reaches out with the other,  
pulling into the spotlight and kissing  
one surprised woman after another  
—frizzy-haired, bespectacled,  
down-home matrons from another continent  
who show their hidden sparkle in his grasp.  
Spent, his arms sweep the room  
to signal the band to begin.

We toast him,  
dine on antipasto and calamari,  
sea bass and veal; gaze  
as locals do the tarantella.  
Before the cappuccino and tiramisu,  
our group circle-dances.  
We are Hoosiers and Californians.  
Virginians and New Yorkers.  
We are opal and garnet,  
amber and amethyst—  
diverse stones linked tightly  
in our joy of Tuscany.

— Sandra Goldsmith  
Chicago, Illinois

## For the Sake of Love

*(In Memory of Joseph Brodsky)*

Long before the world grew weary  
and impatient with the art of writing,  
women wrote notes with quill pens.  
Their sentences composed like a melody of music  
Secret letters sent to lovers' doors at odd hours.  
Unexpected confessions of sorrow or joy  
written while the hand and heart think as one.

My own poems come to light in that need,  
to make sense of the chaos. Some nights I lie awake,  
imagining other abandoned lives and places.  
In the darker hours of midwinter, I hear a distant  
voice speaking.

I see you sitting at the corner table  
at the Russian Tea Room, near Carnegie Hall.  
Your hands hold a black pen; plates of baklava  
and two cups of jasmine tea.

Under a sky of stars in the fragrant desert night,  
we speak of your mother and father living in Leningrad.  
The scent of bougainvillea sweetens the evening.  
We laugh at stray cats in the alleyway.  
Between broken phrases of Yiddish we connect  
our histories, and I know I will stay  
longer to learn your story.

Before we drive to the Tucson airport  
you autograph the borders of pages  
in three books of poetry.  
Your blue denim shirt and dark navy tie  
wrinkled  
as the wind takes you  
away to your flight.

I return to the Sonoran desert,  
dreaming of Ukrainian folk songs  
and your words.

— Nan Toby Tyrrell  
Port Townsend, Washington



## FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA BITES INTO THE TANGERINE OF THE VERY REAL

by Bob Vance

**I**t may be a mistake to limit one's understanding of an artist of Lorca's caliber by enclosing his work within a particular genre of "movement" like Surrealism. Movements and genres are difficult enough to confine in their own self-proclaimed boundaries and are only, perhaps, random points along the evolution of human expression and thought that someone with a superb sense of overview has been able to distill and interpret.

That many "movements" and genres, including Surrealism, include in their seminal manifestoes and definitive works declarations of independence from narrowly-defined and unchanging rules and concepts, has not prevented them from being overtaken, renewed, as it were, by other energetic genres and/or "movements" to which new names and/or attributes are affixed. It is highly possible that by the time any "movement" has been described, distilled, in the way described above, it has already changed, has needed to change to reflect the transformation of human perspectives and personality that is never still, and is hard to perceive in the present because we participate in it so entirely along a line from complete passivity to active engagement and aggressive will.

Many at the center of the Surrealist movement in the first half of the twentieth century declared that their Surrealism described what many artists, writers and thinkers throughout human history had done and what they themselves were determined to refresh and continue to do. André Breton listed historical figures, poets, artists and thinkers he thought were Surrealists years, centuries, before he coined the word. It is in that way only, through such a list, that we might be able to call Federico Garcia Lorca a Surrealist. Any more limited an understanding of Lorca's identity within the Surrealist genre, or any genre, would derogate the full scope of his identity as a poet, dramatist, artist, cultural anthropologist, martyr and cosmic bullfighter.

Rather than being a Surrealist, Lorca incorporated Surrealism into a stylistically wide and evolving body of work while he embraced its finest impulses, that of a liberation of the mind inextricably linked to the liberation of humankind. Lorca may have used techniques associated with the Surrealists: dreamlike imagery and juxtaposition, automatic writing and, at that time, the new Freudian insight and metaphor, but it is clear that throughout his life his work consistently diverged from those techniques or integrated them with others. Poems like "Despedida" ("Saying Goodbye") from *De Suites*, and his play *Yerma* fall entirely outside of what one would recognize as Surrealist. This is no reflection of some shortcoming of those whose body of work more comfortably fits inside the label "Surrealist," or an indication of some lack of commitment or flawed inconstancy on Lorca's part, but rather a true human and artistic phenomenon that demonstrates Surrealism's core beliefs and passion as well as the victory of the evolution of the human soul as seen through the very real, individual, artistic process.

*Bob Vance lives in  
Petoskey, Michigan.*





## THREE POEMS TOWARD THE CANONIZATION OF FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA

### 1. Lorca stands on the roof in the dark.

He smokes a cigarette the way  
he smokes a cigarette:  
in the dark  
on the balcony.

He rides next to you in your new car.  
He takes your face in his cool hands and stares  
the blood of apricots and oranges into your ear.  
His lips brush your eye lids.

Lorca follows you. He sees your Orion  
in the west sky. His eye is as red as Mars  
as blue as the cold lake as brown as deep brown  
as mud that melts up from under the snow.

The suns and all the moons  
slip by with the sound of computers,  
the music of nothing  
gurgling in the throat like blood in the mouths of those who die

anywhere in the world the way Lorca died  
the way only he can see and he sees jails filled  
with Blackmen, the blood of queers wash the streets of the village  
the babies who work the machines to make the rich man's shoes Africa

Africa boiling and dying in her yellow eyes.

### 2. Where is Lorca Swimming?

He swims in the blood of his lovers.

In which bodies does he swim?

In the lake of the blood of Spain.  
It is the lake of the blood of brothers  
of sisters of dry hills, stony swales, it is the place  
of his grave.

Where is Lorca sleeping?

He sleeps in the arms of the murdered.



Where is his pillow, of what is it sewn?

His pillow is the air of his last sigh the space  
one tear displaces. His pillow is the slump  
of the farmer who hummed the wrong songs  
the excellent songs, he lies on the pillows  
of the weeping girls of Andalusia of the boys  
who took no sides who waited for their world  
to begin. His pillow is made from the eyes  
of the sons of generals, of generals still living, of generals  
who ignore the voices that say at last  
kill no more sons.

Where does Lorca swim?

He swims in the blood of his lovers.  
He struggles in the cold current of the screams  
of the horse of Guernica. He swims  
in the blood of his lovers.

Who sleeps with him? Who carries him home  
in the salt wet embrace?

Not a soul. He cries in that crease of earth  
in the rainless swale and they turn  
away, everyone, the entire small town.  
This is before their own raw brains spill rivers  
around the Alhambra. Lorca stands alone:  
wet: afraid: the moon is bloody red the rose  
in the teeth is drunk with murder.  
No one will carry him up the hill  
home.

Where does he dream?

In the tree he grew, in the roots that clutch  
his unfound skull. He paddles over the lake easy  
unforgotten in the arms of his bullfighter in the oranges  
of the afternoon he sighs and sighs and sighs.

Where will Lorca swim?

The rivers of Spain.  
The dry beds of Andalusia.  
The deep deep wells of Granada.  
He swims in the blood of his lovers.

### 3. Lorca and the Swans

Lorca loafs near a small  
grassy pond. Every year he sees  
the swans come back.

Lorca pauses near the small path  
deer use each spring  
He watches summer hide it.

He watches winter close it  
until full of snow it is almost  
invisible. Lorca crosses the sky





over a city where a man  
can't find a companion,  
where the sports of gun

and race kill the urge  
to build his Granada of the heart.  
Lorca eats an orange.

He is not sure who to call.  
The light turns  
to the taste of peaches, split  
pits and rose horizons  
every way he sees.  
Lorca moves above the moon

a satellite himself,  
cruises through the syrup of space  
in parallel line

with any other comet  
that sucks its oval orbit  
toward the riot

that is earth.  
There near misses: how his sun may seed us.  
Lorca is aware if this

as he turns to the songs of small moons  
no one has found a name for, the vines  
of nebulae, the necklaces of brilliant gas

he drapes his arms in,  
the jewels we travel through,  
galaxy, solar system,

lover.  
Lorca knows the swans come back  
to the grassy pond.

He regrets the loss of long kisses,  
quick unexpected touch,  
and eyes.

He says: bring me wine from the last  
coliseum of humming heavenly bodies.  
I will watch the fight from there.

— *Bob Vance*  
*Petoskey, Michigan*

## **"Smart Drugs"**

### **Use Among Men**

A friend  
calls from L.A.  
to say he's put

the pruning  
shears once  
again in the fridge,

or a balled-up  
pair of socks  
in the coffee can.

What can he do?  
Take smart drugs?  
Is there such a thing?

I say I've been  
on them for a year  
with great success,

just so that I can  
remember to put up  
the toilet seat,

mow the grass, take  
out the garbage  
pick the girls up

from school.  
The trouble is  
remembering

to take the darn  
pill every morning  
with icy milk  
and let it curdle  
on my tongue,  
a red sting of smarts.

— *Virgil Suárez*  
*Tallahassee, Florida*

## Scientific Explanation

It is just  
an optical  
illusion created  
when two (2)  
objects are jux-  
taped in such  
a manner as  
to produce a false  
impression such as  
when you take,  
for example, (One)  
this moon and  
place it (Two)  
near this  
horizon thus  
resulting in a  
loud and temporary  
exhibit of  
overbearing moon  
(keep that  
in mind, please).

— *Claudia Burbank*  
*Bernardsville, New Jersey*

## Vegetarian

Unencumbered, I do as I peas,  
Wild scallion at heart, no scars on my knees!  
Olive my life, and accept consequences,  
Lettuce begin to disarm your defenses!

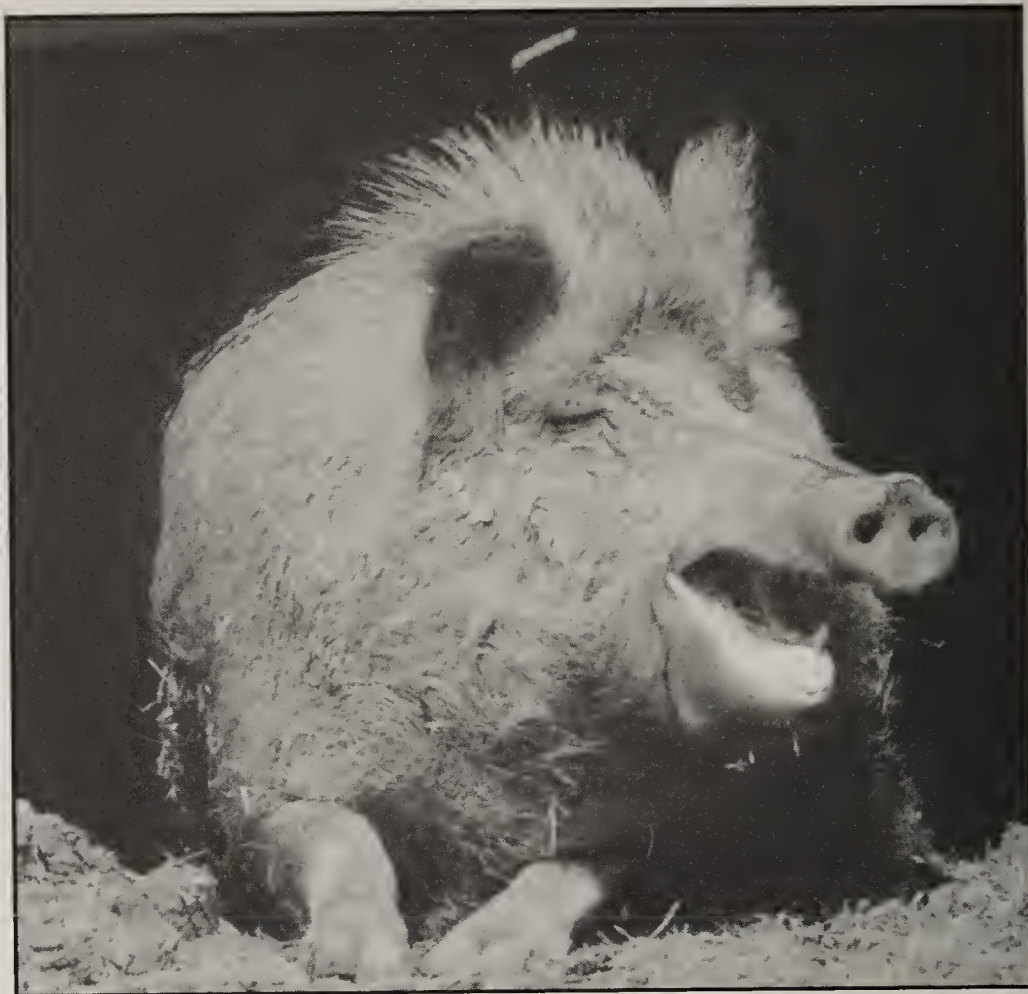
Tofu of us know the raisin we're here,  
You artichoke off those feelings of fear!  
Endive into life, to vine self be true,  
What fools bayleave, they likely can do!

What carrot all what the others might think?  
Turnip your nose from the stench of their stink!  
Spinach what you started and follow your dreams,  
Squash those who tell you it's not as it seems!

Why let them decide what to cauliflower?  
Thyme is too precious to waste one more hour!  
Though their rules confine you, don't give them mushroom,  
Oregano thinking, once nurtured, will bloom!

— *Gary P. Victor*  
*Holly, Michigan*

"Texas Boars" by Gerald Wheeler



## Hairy Deal

Fluffy, fluffy, fluffy, fluffy,  
There, I said it (don't get huffy).  
We use it to define a cloud,  
or a hairy person in a crowd.  
We use it to define a bunny  
(Don't like that, either?)  
(It ain't funny?)  
Too simple, bland, and juvenile?  
Lacking verve, and zest, and style?  
Such a word we shouldn't write?  
Our poetry, it loses might?  
How else could we define a wafting  
bit of fluff (it takes some crafting).  
Sheep, perhaps? A ghostly flock?  
Or cotton wads to clean a clock?  
What of our hirsute and huddled friend?  
Soft and wooly till the end?  
Unshorn, fleecy tufted and furry?  
I get it figured,  
Yet, I worry.

Fluffy bunnies all around,  
Hopping furballs do abound.  
How else to render what eyes would get us,  
With bucktoothed hoppers in the lettuce?

So, fluffy bunnies, clouds, and persons  
(my situation only worsens)  
defining what I see and feel  
is often such a hairy deal.

— *Gregory Susoreny*  
*Munster, Indiana*





## Cows, Headlines, & the 4th

Nothing to do,  
ever.

Except promenade under dawn's auspices,  
bring forth a day's worth of light  
packed in those hefty, speckled sides.  
Later, curtsy beneath the stand of maples  
whisking them toward home and  
dinner.

Let fireworks crackle in Amherst's  
hot sky!

Tomorrow, unabashed,  
back by popular demand,  
the cows will tromp out,  
headlining under that same roof:  
doing the old soft-shoe  
of another day.

— Kathleen M. McCann  
Elsberry, Missouri

## Buying a Butterfly

Butterflies come like that,  
copper, burnished and green;  
and they'd look great there, too,  
though they would fade and die.

Real ones have wings that hint  
at bottoms out of balance,  
and they flit and flutter  
when rain or nectar drips.

You can't store butterflies  
in the shed all winter,  
and they won't stay put where  
you stick them at their best.

Butterflies make sense to  
Scents and pollen alone.  
Flowers, however, last  
and cause little trouble—

Without netting, gassing  
and pinning them to felt.  
We'll take that one, whose hues  
should show off the lilies.

Our garden has just the spot  
for its long copper rod,  
and you will take it back  
if its antennae bend in the wind?

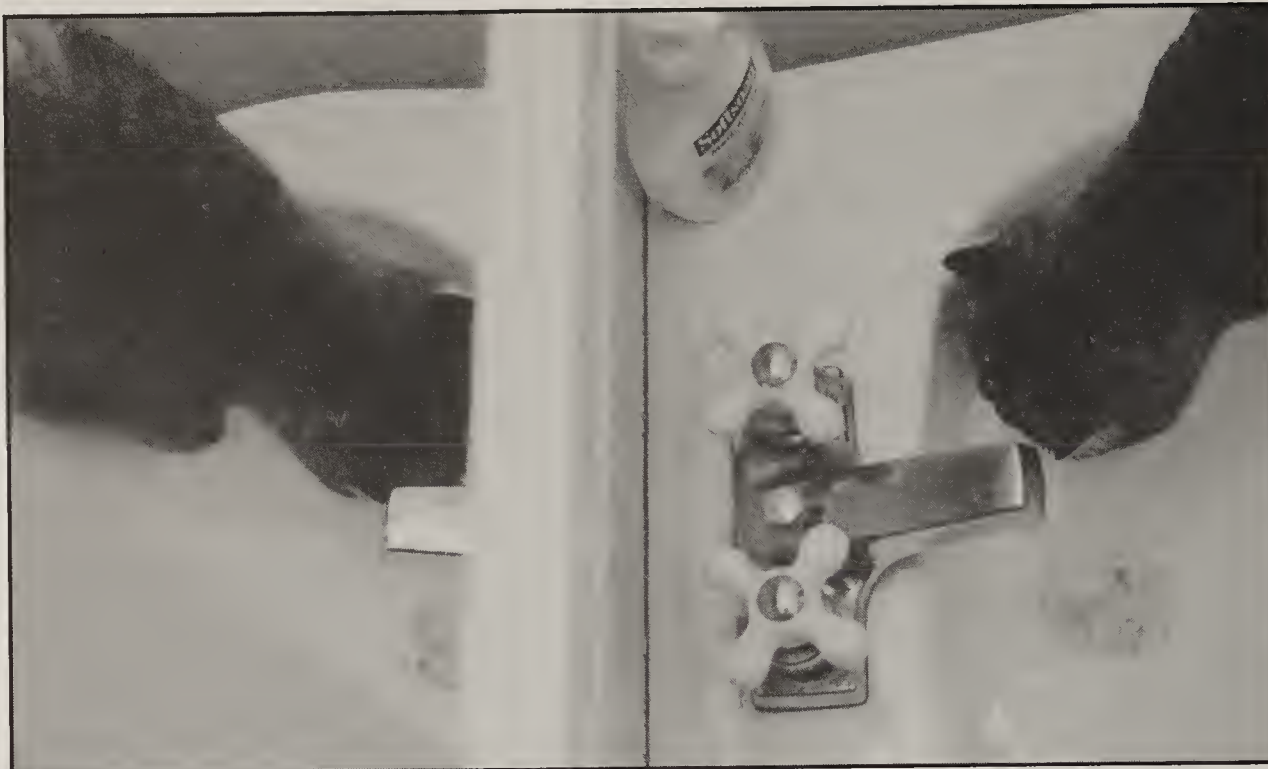
— Michael S. Smith  
Bloomington, Illinois

## Have You Seen Dido?

Black bug scurrying across snow plain table top  
the home it shares with me  
along hidden beams and unseen pipes  
crawling in crafty spaces  
one apartment atop another  
slabs balanced like circus acrobats in a Pyramid  
Have you seen Dido?  
went away  
lived here and ate my soup munched on my plate  
sopped my abandoned tears  
disappeared one long night  
scuttling down dark streets with hairy edges  
leaving behind mournful sighs of warm nights  
few crumbs of identity  
maybe it was me  
maybe I'm the giant monster crowding Dido's space  
dominating this home  
maybe Dido tired of the hopelessness of it  
sought elsewhere  
maybe in the apartment above  
maybe below  
somewhere anywhere  
but not here.

— Gerald Zipper  
New York, New York

Photograph by Kingsley



### My Bathroom Sink

I have a job  
that doesn't require  
a brain  
any more

I could keep it  
in a jar  
on the bathroom sink

Sit it next to the  
mouth guard  
that keeps me from  
grinding my teeth

which I do  
when I think  
of my mindless job

Sit it next to my  
contacts  
still in their white suitcase  
because I'm too vain to admit  
I need them to see

Sit it next to the  
eye cream  
that's reducing puffy eyes  
which is next to the moisturizer  
that's erasing fine lines

My bathroom sink  
is a busy place  
real estate there,  
*a premium*

Where I stand  
and face the truth  
that I'm *not* twenty-eight  
any more

Each morning  
we confront each other  
the twenty-eight year-old  
and me  
and ask ourselves  
...when *did* this happen?

Each morning  
assessing my falling face  
with my clouding vision

Gritting my teeth  
in distaste  
for the work to be done

I say good-bye  
to that *older* woman  
and run,  
brainless  
off to work.

— Jennifer E. Smith  
Virginia Beach, Virginia

### Penance for a Mortal Sin

I chipped a top front tooth  
two weeks before First Communion.  
I ran, said something open-mouthed,  
mad and loud and smacked  
the back of an aluminum chair.  
I was a short seven,  
often hitting the world with my head,  
wanting the excitement of air,  
not able to see and dodge.

In the swallowed bits, I sensed  
I'd sinned against God who wanted  
smiling, holy, whole  
First Communion children;  
blindness not counting  
because He chose that.  
Worse, I'd sinned against my mother  
whose third commandment  
after "Study hard"  
and "Eat everything on your plate"  
was "Don't run."

I cried, afraid  
they'd cancel Communion.  
They filed the tooth,  
said it would fall out  
someday and I would be given  
a second chance if  
I didn't run or open  
my mouth too wide.  
For the next two weeks,  
I didn't.

— Nancy Scott  
Easton, Pennsylvania





## AT THE HEART OF IT ALL

by T. R. Healy

Lee was left alone by the stairwell, staring at another painting that he was not sure was hanging right side up. Briefly, he tilted his head to see if the painting looked any better upside down, but it seemed inscrutable either way. So many of the pictures he had seen tonight made him feel confused and uncertain, which he tried to conceal behind a pensive sneer. He might not comprehend what he was looking at most of the time but no one else needed to know this, he decided, figuring the more thoughtful he appeared the more knowledgeable others would regard him.

The first Thursday of every month a dozen or more art galleries uptown in the Atwater District kept their doors open late into the night, and people were encouraged to visit them as if they were on a pub crawl. Many of the galleries indeed served wine, along with exotic blends of coffee and tea. Lee, if he had anything, drank coffee. He had not had so much as a sip of beer since the car accident he was involved in last winter. Driving home from a bar late one night, so wasted he had to squint to make out some of the road signs, he lost control of the steering wheel and sideswiped a parked van and plowed into a telephone pole. Fortunately, he suffered only a few minor abrasions on his chin and knuckles when he banged his head against the wheel, but the accident rattled him enough that he swore to himself he would quit drinking for at least a month. So far, he had not had a drink in almost five and a half months.

Some acquaintances at the engineering firm where he worked, aware of his self-imposed abstinence, invited him to his initial First Thursdays with the understanding that he would serve as their designated driver. He chauffeured them to a couple of other First Thursdays, as well as numerous birthday parties and anniversaries, and even drove one couple to the beach for the weekend. He was not particularly close to any of these people, knew they only invited him along

because they wanted to have someone to drive home, but he didn't mind. Since his girlfriend was transferred to Chicago by her software company, he had lived alone so he was grateful for the chance to get out of his dingy apartment a few nights each month.

"Something to drink, sir?"

Startled, Lee turned away from another enigmatic painting toward an attractive waitress with a tray full of glasses of white wine poised in her left hand. "Sorry, but I'm the designated driver for the folks I came here with tonight."

She smiled coyly. "I don't think one glass of wine will impair your faculties too much."

"Honestly, I can't," he told her. "I don't drink anything stronger than Italian roast coffee."

"But you used to, right?"

"Oh, yes. Enough to get myself in a little trouble every now and then until I finally learned my lesson."

"I'm impressed. I wish more people were as responsible as you because I guarantee you many who leave here tonight should definitely not be behind the wheel of a car."

He noticed the crimson name tag on her blouse. "Kira."

"Yes?"

"You sound as if you need a ride home tonight?"

Sighing, she maneuvered around him, hoisting the tray above her head. "No, not tonight, but sometimes I do."

He watched her weave between two obese women, as others lifted glasses from her tray then disappear into a back room of the gallery. Curiously he tried to recall if he had ever met anyone with her name, but if he had, he doubted very much if she was anywhere near as attractive as this waitress because he was positive he would have remembered. A smile curled out of the corners of his mouth as he looked for his colleagues from work. No one was in sight, not even the new secretary who had sat in the front seat with him. and he suspected they

had wandered across the street to the Chinese gallery on the corner. He was tempted to join them but didn't, hoping to catch another glimpse of the comely waitress, and dutifully examined some more paintings on exhibit.

To his delight, a minute or so later, Kira approached him with a faint gleam in her eyes. "I've been thinking about your offer of a ride home," she said softly.

"Oh, of course. That shouldn't be a problem. When do you get off work?"

"Oh, not tonight, but I could use a lift over to Orchards tomorrow afternoon if that's at all possible."

Her request startled him, and he hesitated, deciding whether he could afford to miss another day of work.

"I know it's a terrible imposition but my car has been leaking a lot of oil recently so I don't think I can risk driving it as far away as Orchards," she explained hurriedly.

"How long are you going to be there?"

"Just an hour or so. Not any longer."

"Sure, I suppose I could drive you there if you want."

Tenderly she gripped his wrist. "Bless you, sir."

\* \* \*



Orchards was a small residential community approximately twenty-eight miles northeast of town, which Lee often passed through on his way to the mountains. Kira suggested he pick her up at a bus kiosk near his apartment house at one o'clock. He arrived a few minutes early but didn't recognize her at first, her loose brown hair was concealed under a tattered scarf, and she had a yellow rain slicker that graced the tops of her Keds. She was dressed for a considerable downpour, though the forecast was for dry weather throughout the day. Slung over her left shoulder was a bulging nylon camera bag





that was so heavy she leaned to her left as she walked to his car.

A waitress for a catering company managed by her aunt, she informed him during the drive that she had recently returned to college after an absence of more years than she cared to remember. She barely looked twenty-one, but to his amazement she admitted she would turn thirty in another three months. Among the classes she was taking was one in landscape photography and she explained that her instructor had recommended she take pictures of the petrified forest in Orchards. He thought it might be an interesting subject for the small album of photographs each student was required to submit at the end of the semester.

Lee was aware of the strange trees but had never seen them so Kira had to direct him to the small park near the center of town where they were located. Unable to drive into the park, its entrance blocked by a rusted steel pole, he parked across the street under a shady willow tree. At once, Kira pushed open her door and climbed out, slipping the camera bag over her shoulder.

"Would you like me to come with you?" he asked as she started across the street.

"Oh, you better not," she said abruptly. "Mr. Westphal, my instructor, is pretty adamant about us doing all of our own work."

"I wouldn't get in your way."

"I know, but I really have to do this on my own."

He started to say that he had no intention of telling her how to take her pictures, since he wasn't anything more than a weekend photographer himself, but could see she was eager to get started with her work so he let her continue across the street. Futilely, he searched for some decent music on the radio then he switched it off and leaned back and slid his hands behind his neck and let his eyes close for a moment. He knew he should be at his drafting board now, drawing more plans for that business park he had been working on the past couple of months. Really, he could not believe he was not there, almost wondered if he should pinch himself to make sure he wasn't hallucinating. He snickered, reminded of all the times he had skipped class in high school. From the moment he saw her the other night he wanted to get to know her, probably because

she looked a little like the computer programmer he had been living with for almost a year. Otherwise, she was nothing at all like her but was someone who seemed genuinely interested in what he had to say rather than in how it related to her.

Some twenty minutes later she returned to the car. She appeared to have been crying, her eyes were puffy and red, her nose dripped, the blood glowed in her cheeks. Concerned, he got out to meet her in the middle of the street and slipped the camera bag from her shoulder.

"Is everything all right?"

She nodded, seemingly embarrassed. "It's my allergy. I started sneezing and I couldn't stop, and my eyes were leaking like a sieve."

"Oh, I thought something might have happened to you."

"No, everything's all right."



Soon after they started back Kira remarked that she would like to return next week when the light was better and take some more pictures of the trees. She hoped she would be able to get her car repaired by then, but if not, she planned to look into the prospects of taking a bus to Orchards.

"If you're really serious about shooting some more pictures there, I can take you," he offered.

"Oh, no, I can't impose on you any further. What you've done already is more than enough."

"Really, it isn't an imposition."

"What about your job?"

"Please, don't worry about it. I've got scads of sick days coming to me that I'll otherwise never use."

"I can't tell you how grateful I am, Lee."

He smiled at her, reminded of something his mother used to say to him when he was a youngster: "Whenever I followed my heart, the best things happen."

\* \* \*

The next time he drove her to Orchards Lee again sat in his car while she took her pictures. He waited only a few minutes, however, then his curiosity got the better of him and he decided to sneak a glimpse of her at work. Just a glimpse, he cautioned himself, because he didn't want to let her see him. The soft cedar-chip trail to the trees was well



marked, and he followed it for about a quarter of a mile until he noticed a throng of people in the distance. Figuring Kira was among them, he stepped off the trail and continued through the brush. When he got within a few yards of the gathering, he paused behind an elm tree and looked for her, but she wasn't there. He was puzzled. It was too early for her to have returned to the car and, besides, if she had, he would have seen her on the trail. Flustered, he shuffled down to the crowd and barely even glanced at the ancient trees, then turned around to head back to the car. And it was at that moment that he spotted her, crouched on a small slope above the trees, snapping pictures of some children playing on the schoolground that was next to the park. He assumed she had enough pictures of dead trees and decided to photograph something else for her class project. Quickly he moved on before she noticed him.

Again, she appeared to have been crying when she returned to the car, her eyes were even puffier than they were last week. Before he could say anything to her, though, she remarked sternly, "I saw you in the park."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"I thought I'd stretch my legs a little," he explained. I didn't mean to disturb you."

"I suppose you're wondering why I was taking pictures of those children on the schoolground?"

"Oh, I just figured you were tired of photographing trees."

Her eyes again became rimmed with tears. "I'm sorry, Lee, but I really haven't been honest with you. You see, I'm not enrolled in any photography class and I am sure as hell not up here taking pictures of any damn trees."

He stared at her in silence, dumbfounded.

"I'm here to take pictures of my daughter who attends the school next to the park."

"I didn't know you were married."

"I wasn't. I had her when I was still in high school and had to give her up for adoption because there was no way I could properly look after her."

"That's too bad. I'm sorry."

Suddenly, she collapsed into his arms, sobbing uncontrollably, and tentatively, awkwardly he stroked her hair with the back of his hand. This was something he wanted to do ever since he first saw her at the gallery, but

under these circumstances he felt as clumsy as a schoolboy. A few moments later, after she composed herself, she said that through a distant cousin she recently had learned that her daughter attended this school, but admitted she had no idea which one was hers since she hadn't set eyes on her since she was an infant.

"That's why I come here week after week and take all these pictures so I can study them later and try and figure out which child is mine," she declared, her voice cracking a little. "I must have a couple of shoeboxes full of snapshots."

"You mean you still haven't identified your daughter?"

She shook her head as she drew from the camera bag a manila envelope with some of the latest pictures she had taken. "Here, why don't you see which one you think most resembles me."



Carefully, he sorted through the snapshots but was unable to distinguish any particular girl as her daughter. He did manage to select three girls that he thought bore some resemblance to her, particularly around the mouth and eyes.

She nodded calmly, as if she anticipated his

selection. "Others I've shown these pictures to have picked some of the same girls."

"How many people have seen them?" he asked, somewhat surprised, having assumed they would have been rather confidential.

"Oodles, I suspect. Practically everyone I get to know well enough I show them to and ask their opinion."

"Including others who have driven you here?"

"Oh, sure. Definitely."

Suddenly he didn't feel as important to her as he hoped—all he was, he realized, was her driver. Just as he was for his colleagues at work. He reached out to touch her hair but instinctively she squirmed away as she crammed the snapshots back into the envelope. Somehow he was not surprised by her response, not now anyway, and he turned on the motor and slowly drove away from the park.

\* \* \*

Kira declined his offer to drive her to Orchards the following week, saying she was confident her car would be repaired by then, and when Lee asked if he could have her telephone number so he could call to make sure that happened, she took his number instead and said she would call him if things didn't work out. He never heard from her, however, which didn't surprise him that much, since all she really wanted from him, he suspected, was his opinion as to which girl he thought was her daughter. Once she had that she didn't require his services any longer and probably was looking for someone else to sort through her bundle of pictures. Some day soon, out of curiosity, he intended to return to the park and see if she was there with another driver. He was sure she would be, and though he might be tempted to say something to her, he would probably stand behind a tree so he would not disturb her and watch her snap picture after picture of all those strange little girls on the playground.

*T. R. Healy lives  
in Portland, Oregon.*



### A Nurse in Need

Like a pretty butterfly flitting to and fro,  
 You barely alight on the nearly withered  
     Flower of my body.  
 You leave the dew of healing with me  
     And soothing balm for my soul.  
 Your sweet voice refreshes my very heart  
     Like a gentle rain waters  
     A parched garden.

— *Richard M. Bacevicius*  
*Hammond, Indiana*

### in memory of Oskar Schindler

“But I should  
 have saved more,”  
 he said—  
 “I could have  
 saved more,”  
 he said,  
 and he cried,  
 and tears  
 dipped down his face—

but a man  
 hugged him  
 and held him  
 and said to him—  
 “But what more  
 could you have done?  
 But a single man saved  
 is a priceless gem  
 in God’s eyes  
 nothing  
 can be  
 more worthy  
 than a single  
 man-woman-child  
 saved,  
 it is the greatest deed  
 a man can do  
 and God remembers  
 everything—  
 and therefore  
 we place  
 His holy rocks  
 upon his  
 gravestone

— *Charles B. Tinkham*  
*Gary, Indiana*

### Rare Art

Sadly  
 Sin has corrupted man  
     A stage  
     Canvas  
     Stone  
 Painter satan  
 Sculptor satan

Sadly  
 Man has corrupted the world  
     God’s world  
     Showcase  
     Museum  
 Man on display  
 Exhibitionist

Thankfully  
 God has paid the price of a ticket  
 He has the skill to restore  
 And the desire to collect  
     Rare art

— *Kimbal Binder*  
*Cedar Lake, Indiana*

### Portrait of a Mother

Once she lived in a world of submission,  
 watching her children grow, with devotion,  
 and filling their hearts with her affection.  
 Their joys were her happiness  
 and their sorrows were her sadness.

Much of her life passed  
 dedicated to them;  
 yet, she never asked  
 anything in return.  
 Her love was pure essence!

Now she dwells in a world of tranquility,  
 and fills her children’s hearts  
 with constant reminiscence;  
 kissing them from afar,  
 she implores God to give them serenity.

— *Mariá O. Longas*  
*Hammond, Indiana*

### the great charro

the world  
 is a lovely, lonely place—  
 that which has been  
 can never be again—

rivers, mountains,  
 deserts—  
 they all change—  
 never to be again—

but at the back  
 of my mind  
 I still see Zapata—  
 I hear him speak to me

the great charro,  
 the rebel,  
 the anarchist—  
 the man  
 afraid of nothing—  
 not death itself—

his eyes are sharp  
 as darts—  
 he never smiles,  
 he is murderous

his great white steed  
 neighs nervously  
 and there is  
 a great green field  
 of maize  
 around him,  
 leaves sparkling

in the sun

he does not retreat  
 or yield—  
 undying,  
 he still lives

at the back  
 of my mind  
 he still speaks  
 to me

nothing is changed  
 or altered  
 all is permanent  
 and unyielding  
 he does not fall—

there is no death—  
 the great charro

— *Charles B. Tinkham*  
*Gary, Indiana*





## To an Office Rose

A rose arose from stem to bloom.  
Its sweet red head bejeweled the room.  
I looked around with probing eyes,  
And marvelled at its robust size.

Carnations punch us in the nose,  
No stronger spice in flower that grows.  
But roses are seductive friends  
That give us loving, sensate blends.

Gardenias give a pleasant tweak  
To one with an outgoing beak,  
But pallid in its color scheme,  
A monotonal signal beam.

The rose was on our steno's desk.  
It put my faculties to test.  
It made me make my eyebrows raise—  
An old Coke bottle was its vase.

— *Henry White*  
*Crown Point, Indiana*

## Fatal

She cannot breathe.  
The doctor has not returned the call  
And thus we pass the night,  
Struggling with death.

I walk into her room at 2 a.m.  
She seems at peace like fruit  
That lies at the bottom of the bowl,  
her young dog curled  
like a dark cloud at her feet.

The commode sits ready, the new walker  
Never used. Freshly laundered sleep wear  
Is folded for the nightly changes.  
And thus it is Friday night two weeks  
Before Christmas and I'm now  
Sitting in a chair staring across the bed,  
Where hardly a sound is heard.

One car, two cars go by, their headlights  
Breaking in the bedroom window,  
Where the snow lies deeply on the sill.  
The snow that lies across mountains,  
That disappears into rivers.

— *Robert P. Cooke*  
*Highland, Indiana*

## Hannah

Willowy, you stand  
head tilted, alert,  
like a young deer

Your aquamarine eyes  
sometimes startled,  
widen as you watch

Your corn silk hair  
snuggles round your neck,  
and down upon your shoulders

Your words tumble forth  
like a mountain brook,  
bubbling over pebbles

You hold yourself aloof  
observing—not joining  
content in your own person

— *Laura Ruben*  
*Hammond, Indiana*

## PaPa Azteca...PaPa Confucius!

Claustrophobia and isolation  
Make me shout my angry anthems  
Into the silence  
Amid midnight horrors.  
My heavy heart again and again  
Begins to feel anonymous.

My lover  
Brings the tears of luck and fortune.  
I don't follow her any more.  
I dreamt these hallucinations  
When I discovered *Mother Nature*  
A day, long ago, in the summer.

The blue, blue winds make me fly.  
The fragrances of religion  
Transmit from solitude  
An overwhelming dream of bliss and silence.

— *Jesus A. Gutierrez*  
*East Chicago, Indiana*



## RUDOLF FUCHS AND HIS EXPRESSIONIST POETRY

by Martin Wasserman

The poetry of Rudolf Fuchs (1890-1942) enjoyed a substantial reputation amongst the early twentieth-century "Prague Circle" of modern writers. For example, Rainer Maria Rilke said of Fuchs' work that it "delightfully revealed hidden threads both of the inner and outer worlds." Fuchs' good friend, Franz Kafka, stated that Fuchs was a devoted "servant to the word" because he gave each of his poems "a value far above his own humble soul." However, after Fuchs' death, his poetry was generally forgotten until the 1980s when an anthology of his writings was published in Germany. Yet, as far as I can determine, only one of Fuchs' poems has ever been translated into English, and that was over thirty years ago. Therefore, in order to provide this deserving poet with a broader audience, I have decided to translate three of Fuchs' poems from German into English. [See the two published here: *Ode to Seed-Corn* and *Risengrund in Winter*.]

Rudolf Fuchs was born in the historic Czech Bohemian town of Podebrady, with Czech being his first language. However, he was educated in German-language schools so, by the time he reached adulthood and settled in Prague, he was completely bilingual. Because of his great facility in both languages, he decided to earn his living as a translator. Fuchs' most important contribution in this area was his translation, from Czech to German, of Petr Bezruc's work on the Czech rural poor, entitled *Schlesische Lieder (Silesian Songs)*. Because of his tireless efforts to achieve rapprochement between Czech and German writers, he eventually was awarded the esteemed Czechoslovak Herder prize in 1937.

In addition to his translation abilities, Fuchs was a fine poet in his own right. Commenting on Fuchs' body of work, literary critics have asserted that it stood squarely in the expressionist camp. Indeed, almost all of the books and journals which published his work were generally known as German expressionist outlets. The key quality which confirmed Fuchs' writings to be in the expressionist genre was a heartfelt inquiry from the depths. This attribute, in turn, allowed Fuchs to dramatically decipher the world around him as he had experienced it. On this score, two of the realities which most concerned Fuchs were his search for an authentic Jewish niche in the world, and his profound attachment to the rural Czech terrain and landscape. (Owing to their importance, both of these concerns will find representation in the translated poems selected by *Skylark* here.)

During 1939 Rudolf Fuchs was forced, first, to leave Czechoslovakia and, then, to emigrate to England because of the Nazi invasion of his home country. Despondent and sullen due to the fact that he now had to live in exile, Fuchs took it upon himself to walk through the streets of London during blackouts when it was customary for all residents to stay indoors. As a result, he, tragically, was hit by a speeding bus going through an intersection with a broken traffic light. He died shortly thereafter on February 17, 1942.

Martin Wasserman lives in  
Queensbury, New York.





## Ode To Seed-Corn

Sleep  
recedes early;  
then, with roving eyes  
of insatiable blue,  
the sower grasps  
a handful of seed-corn  
embodied as "Thou,"  
and scatters you with a huge hand  
into the furrow;  
his feet walk across you  
as if you were grass.

Before you sank,  
when you flew—  
it was noon and full light—  
dimly,  
you saw in the distance,  
on the green meadow of the mountain  
a house, a pretty country home.  
"I cannot live  
without entering!"  
These were the words you screamed inside,  
but the clouds came  
and shaded your heart  
as if you were grass.

When you fell,  
when you approached the moment,  
it grew to eternity.  
The bushes sang in the evening  
and the meadows were fragrant.  
The moon began to glow, white  
and whiter,  
and—"be blessed, be blessed"—  
the peace of the mountains  
strode across you  
as if you were grass.

Who filled me with this song?  
Yesterday I lay open,  
wounded and senseless.  
Now it is the wind which has brought me  
your lilting song of growth.

## Risengrund in Winter

Writing, writing is written.  
And that which resonates is exalted,  
unhappy for a lonely winter  
the snowy forest shall write: There, there!  
A thousandfold existence, branch over branch—  
white shingles on roof watching the slope: So?  
So, it is gracious.  
Prayer wings over a table and hearth—  
only the snow in far reaches  
keeps white silence  
above ancient roots and springs.  
And secretly he now opens his round eyes,  
resilient eyes which are clear and inquiring.  
Whereto? Whereto, oh climber?  
We carry this world—we day and we night—  
but you who are leaving a grand trace,  
you who once walked in my dreams,  
soon you will soar towards the infinite.

# The poetry of Rudolf Fuchs translated by Martin Wasserman



## Old Feelings

The moment was too intimate to keep.  
We had to make a compromise with dusk  
To keep the blue from entering our bones.  
The shadow of old feelings held us fast.

I think some things should never have been said  
Over those cups of coffee that we shared.  
The warmth of smoke brought all the longing back  
To drink the landscape in each other's eyes.

— Sandra Fowler  
West Columbia, West Virginia



## Good Citizen

I attend at least one wake a week,  
tell them I'm related, but not to them.  
I shmooze like a Christmas-letter  
cousin, fill in every moment of my life.  
Keeps their minds on the living. I tell them  
how the deceased was a good and loving person,  
truly at home in a mansion reserved by the Almighty.  
I always wear a suit, clean shirt and new tie. I even  
clean and polish my nails. I want to be prepared.  
I carry a living will, an obituary poem and a twenty  
dollar bill for the local newspaper. Of course  
I don't tell the grieving these facts. I tell them  
how the departed once loaned me the money  
and never expected it back. I give them the twenty  
to cover some flowers. I tell them to eat celery  
and develop negative calories. That's good for a two  
minute diversion. I tell them the deceased was a hazard  
to navigation, never wore running lights at night.  
This confuses the issue for at least five minutes. Relatives  
begin to circle, press for details, ask which  
side of the family I represent. I tell them at weddings  
I never know if I'm friend of bride or groom.  
I stand in the middle of the aisle so not to offend.  
I add jocularly, tell them my father always remarked  
that weddings and funerals were the same event.  
A chunky family member always moves in close  
like he's going to bump bodies. I move him away  
by noting how Mary Kilwolski, at rest across the hall,  
has hair to match the blue satin lining. She's lovely,  
bless her soul. One-hundred eight years old.  
What a beautiful lady. Should see her. I'll mosey  
over since I'm in the vicinity....Don't you think  
I fit right in? I'm the poet, writing furiously ahead  
of the undertaker. I always leave a poem taped  
to the underside of the coffin. Food for a long journey.

— Doug Flaherty  
Neenah, Wisconsin

## The Watch

On the third day, I crawled in  
beside him, cradled his head  
in the crook of my arm and hummed  
a little nursery tune, then moved on  
through songs I could remember he  
had cherished: "Moon Over Miami,"  
"I've Got a Girl." I didn't know  
if he listened; I don't know if he  
knew I was singing to get myself  
straight, to retrace the normal, erasing  
nurses in their day-glow goodness,  
all the paraphernalia that tries to suck  
the sting out of dying, drip by drip.

On that final day, the weather turned,  
I took his head in my hands—loopy  
ears, sprigs of matted hair—and turned  
it toward the slatted window  
to a rush of young maples the color  
of blood, bent low in a whirligig  
wind, washed clean and shining.

What was finally right was this:  
the trees, small rivulets of rain in a  
rush to go somewhere past observation,  
his wide palms opening, the tranquil veins.

— Jan Bailey  
Greenville, South Carolina



## Yesterday

Baby teeth glint like silver dollars in the moonlight of the  
fresh plowed Iowa fields

All night the stars have been drilling for oil in the  
Missouri River

Like a herd of locusts Yesterday arrives

It begins to untie the treads of darkness and prepares to  
swallow Omaha in a single gulp

Even the glass picture frame that held my father's image  
is chewed to a fine powdery sand

Where a wind rises and falls spinning it into the shape of  
an antique hourglass

— *John McKernan*  
*Huntington, West Virginia*

## Ahab's Widow

I wait for him as every whaler's wife.  
I write him letters every day.  
I tell him how he grows bigger and stronger.

I tell him of his first words and of his first walk on his own.  
I write, "What a lovely little pip he is."  
I write, "I call him that sometimes, instead of Malcolm."

I write, "Rachel says he's often mischievous."  
I write, "Come home to us safely."  
At dusk, as the sun goes down

behind the white  
clapboard house and the elms' shadows  
reach out across the lawn to meet the ocean's lip,

I climb the stairs to pace the widow's walk.  
I fold my hands on the rail and pray  
and blow a kiss out to sea,

then go inside to kiss the boy good-night.  
I sleep in a bed wider than oceans.  
I dream on sheets whiter than wedding gowns.

— *J.R. Solonche*  
*Blooming Grove, New York*

## Haiku

scent of white roses—  
young daughter's casket lowered—  
descending butterfly wings

— *William Beyer*  
*Belvidere, Illinois*

## Umbra #083

A man should be  
as a field of grain.

The sun shines from the heavens  
and there is honesty.

The rain falls from the heavens  
and there is honesty.

A man's speech should be  
as the impeccable brook  
never engaging in flattery  
never indulging in superfluity.

A man should be  
as a sky full of ravens.

How many ravens are there  
but all sing in a harmony.

— *George Gott*  
*Superior, Wisconsin*



# BITS AND PIECES

by Shirley Jo Moritz



After a hectic day at the office, I was comfortably sitting in my living room, hugging a mug of tea. I surveyed the room until my gaze fell upon the oil painting above my fireplace. Taking a sip of warm tea, I wondered what true-life stories the artist, Steininger, may have hidden in his brush strokes. Placing my mug on an end table, I stood and took a few steps to the side for a different view of the swayback roof of his rustic covered bridge.

The rural scene on the canvas always piques my imagination. I can easily step into Steininger's world of wood bridge, shade trees, and wildflowers sketched by a stream that flows lazily through summer. The entrance to the covered bridge beckons me into a nostalgic past. I recall the farm in Humboldt, Illinois, where I had lived before I was of school age. The landscape in the oil painting reminds me of playing under a shade tree near our farmhouse. Those were happy, carefree days.

Now, in my mind's eye, I am on the dirt road that curves into Steininger's bridge. I search about for the buzz that catches my attention. There among the flowers a bumblebee darts from one blossom to the other,

his wings almost invisible. I observe several mayflies, too, as they whirr about and then light on daisy petals.

A soft breeze flutters the leaves of the maples, oaks, and birches that thinly line a farmer's pasture. From their branches, sparrow, cardinal, and wren call to one another. Listening to their delightful chirping, I look to the clouds above that sparkle in their cloaks of white.

My shoulders relax and I don't even start when, abruptly, a frog plops into the stream that flows beneath the bridge. From a lily pad, another frog hops onto the grassy bank. Camouflaged against the light and dark blades of the overgrowth, he sits motionless except for the swelling and deflating of his throat.

Nearby, a garter snake slithers atop a gray, flat rock and lies there warming itself. Like the frogs, could the snake have a friend with him? I'd better move on! Monarch butterflies ignore the snake's presence. They continue to flit from here to there, seeking the nectar of the flowers. As I watch the butterflies, I think of the time my girlfriend from the next farm and I would collect sweet clover. By the hour, we would fashion our very own clover necklaces, bracelets, and

rings. I smile as I remember when we wanted to know why the cows liked to chew it, so we each ate one clover. With grimaces on our faces, we agreed that the cows could eat all the rest!

Now I hear the excited chatter of children echoing from inside the rickety old bridge. A dog's playful bark escapes from the two open spaces where boards should have been, but have long ago rotted away. A girl, with her barefoot little brother at her side, calls to someone beyond the bridge. A gangly youth in a straw hat waves to the girl. Then once more, he gazes toward his bobber. He chews on a long straw, his fishing pole steadied by an agile foot.

Unlike this lone fisherman, I usually accompanied my dad when we caught pan fish in the creek that ran behind our farmhouse. I would sit for hours beside him, faithfully watching his bobber. At the slightest nibble, I would warn him. We didn't let many get away. And Mother sure knew how to fry them. My mouth waters thinking of those meals. I see this lone fisherman, too, as having family to share his catch with. I imagine the girl and her brother to be his neighbors.

From one of the openings in the bridge, I



## Influenza

I awaken  
slowly  
from drug-induced  
sleep

eyelashes  
stuck shut

nose filled  
with Elmer's glue

lips  
made of  
terry cloth

The roof of my mouth  
feels like  
patent leather

from sleeping  
with it  
wide open

A puddle of drool  
where my pillow  
used to be

A crumbled Kleenex  
pyramid  
beside the bed

Abandoned  
by my husband  
for the room down the hall

because I snored  
like a lumberjack  
all night long

Three days  
have passed  
and all I want  
is to die

But if I live  
I make this vow

Never will I eat  
chicken noodle soup  
again

and never  
will I forget  
how good it feels  
to *feel good*  
again

— *Jennifer E. Smith*

visualize little brother skipping a pebble across the water. Watching the place where the stone lands and sinks, I see a series of rings as they enlarge and then vanish at the water's edge. The young fisherman is upset with the action of the boy who scurries away, leaving his laughter to echo from the rafters. This sound brings to mind the hollow clip clop of horses' hooves and the wagon lumbering over a covered bridge's wooden planks that Dad and I crossed one afternoon. Dad even let me hold the horses' reins to guide them through the enclosed tunnel. I was thrilled beyond measure.

**S**oon, the girl, who a minute ago was calling to the young fisherman, bounds off across the meadow, her waist-length braids flying. The boy who threw the pebble is now trying to keep up with her. The dog romps around the boy, his tail fencing like a sword with the tall grass all about him. As the children depart, their voices slowly trail off into silence. I recall sometimes running through a pasture of waist-high grain that tickled my skin and sometimes gave me goose bumps. Even now, I think of how I

could stir up a breeze every time I take a drive in the country.

Closer to the bridge, the scent of fresh-cut weeds mixes with dust from the sandy shoulder of the road. As if showing off her brood, a mama duck walks her twelve ducklings to the shore, then paddles off, making sure each of her babies follows. Single file, they head for the shade of the bridge and cross to the opposite bank.

As I reach the entrance to the covered bridge, I hesitate. Should I enter into the dusk of the bridge's interior? Would it be cooler inside? Would the air seem stale and close? Would the beauty of my thoughts about my childhood be stifled or altered? What if the magic is broken because I am no longer an observer? I may not ever want to come here again. I'm uneasy with such feelings and decide to let my thoughts take me back into the present.

With a grin, I return to my living room, my easy chair, and my mug of tea. I glanced over my shoulder and called to my husband, "Bob! Please come here a minute."

"Why?" he said as he approached.

I waited until he stood beside my chair. I looked up and said, "I just discovered something!"

"What?" he said, returning my gaze.

"I always thought I knew why I had been searching for five years for just the right painting to hang here. I felt that something colorful was important to this room. But standing here today, I've also discovered that it's not what's ON the canvas that entices a person to buy an oil painting—it's what's IN the mind's eye when one looks at it! The bits and pieces of our lives are what's important." I then began to explain what I imagined each time I stood before the painting and gazed at the complexity of Steininger's work.

I take great pleasure in knowing that, no matter how tired I may be, the tranquility and peace of this oil painting always relax me because the scene allows me to imagine the priceless sights and sounds of my past. As long as this particular piece of art created by Steininger is displayed in my house, I will remember the bits and pieces from people and events in my childhood that shaped my life into who and what I am today.

*Shirley Jo Moritz lives  
in Merrillville, Indiana.*

## Arabic Eyes

We don't just want to  
uncover our heads,  
for god's sake.

Lift the veil  
from our imaginations!

— Alan Britt  
Reisterstown, Maryland

## Night

My love and I  
wrapped inside  
evening's soft mist  
heart's song  
lifted  
carried  
into its shell  
held there  
to meet  
the morning

— Patti Holzman  
San Luis Obispo, California

## without vision

we are at the mercy  
of whatever trinkets or sirens  
catch our fancy—

no beginning, no end,  
no muss no fuss,  
we live in the middle

where anxiety and confusion  
smile at us  
like pond skunks.

— Michael S. Glaser  
St. Mary's City, Maryland

## YOU READ TO ME

(Visiting a Loved One During the Holiday Season)

by Jeff Manes

**I**f German ancestry and Minnesotan roots, it was comforting to hear your inherent, guttural chuckle when amused. You were one of eighteen children, including two sets of twins, all born at home, all given seven or eight names each. The old Lutheran way.

You worked so hard all your life yet lived in poverty. I can't imagine what you might have done with a college education, but you never complained. About anything. "God is good to us."

And you read to me.

The smell of your lotion. Jergen's? Noxzema? An old country cuckoo clock. A wondrous garden that included vine-ripened tomatoes, mammoth sunflowers and rhubarb. I think back to when you held me up so that I could waltz with you to Lawrence Welk.

Pomegranates. What did you call them—

Christmas apples? And bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwiches with Miracle Whip. I also recall half and half, chocolate chip pie and lemon meringue pie so tart only you and I could eat it. That lemon squeezer got quite a workout. Didn't it? I believe you were the first person on earth to try the Rice Krispies Squares recipe on the back of the box. There was piping hot Jell-O water, good for the fingernails, you said, and ice water—good for everything.

You nourished me; you read to me.

Crayola crayons and coloring books, endless hours of *Youth Scrabble* and eventually *Scrabble*, *Yahtzee*, crossword puzzles. Stacks of newspaper articles that you found interesting or humorous cached away. Your Internet, I suppose. Old-fashion cut and paste.

The things you taught me. The way you taught me. From the beginning. The Bible, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, *The Little Match Girl*,

books on dinosaurs. All of these and so many more you read to me.

Although widowed young, you were of the hardiest stock. If not for the accident. Too many miles, too little sleep, he crumpled your tiny Chevy like a ball of aluminum foil, smashing your chest against the steering wheel. "Better to kill 'em than cripple 'em," some of them have been known to say. Well.... A spot. A mastectomy. A wig. Six pall bearers.

Many years have passed. It is still difficult gazing at your name etched in stone. I find it somewhat easier poring over the written words of this shaking piece of paper. See Grandma, it's my turn.

I read to you.

*Jeff Manes lives  
in Lowell, Indiana.*



## The Earth Seems to Stop

Summer mid-morning  
the sun suddenly appears  
after an early rain.  
Still points of light  
gleam on tree leaf,  
grass blade, flower petal:  
the air a fluid clarity.  
Fenno Street beckons  
us to walk, to run—  
and leads us to the bay.  
We rejoice with gulls,  
with sea ducks;

delighted as on dewy  
summer mornings  
where as small children  
we'd leap down porch steps  
to be first on the swings.

Summer mornings gather  
themselves up after rain  
and let fall as gossamer,  
golden rays, which we must  
follow if not reflect.  
In this recreation, life itself  
becomes our one parent  
and all of us become one child.  
Dancing in the light,  
we're part of the light—  
as in one sun, each of us  
stands a glorious ray.

— Joanne Stokkink  
Wollaston, Massachusetts

## Remembrance

I saw you standing  
In this garden  
The hanging vine above you  
The peach tree warm  
Now—  
The snow hurries down  
As the branches claw  
The white sky  
In rebellion.

The grass is laden with its white burden,  
The tree stacked with tracery,  
Sky a wilderness of flakes,  
And you, though far away  
Stand embowered here in light.

The evening, still now, blue-cold  
And tree a porcelain hand  
With long white nails,  
The hanging vine a web of ivory  
All around you  
Make the twilight faintly warm.

— David Napolin  
Port Washington, New York

## Burial at Sea

Only in Ireland and Russia  
can a poet rank  
as a national treasure.

In Dublin you retrace his  
steps as if they led  
to the holy grail

while in Petersburg you bring  
frankincense and myrrh  
to anoint the vault.

When we find such icons  
we lock them up for life  
in ivory towers

or turn them out to sea  
until the tide washes back  
the shattered pieces.

So many ships have sunk  
beneath the waves—how many  
carried lost treasure?

— Judi A. Rypma  
Kalamazoo, Michigan

## Midnights

Hot steel is being poured  
to form new ingots

Whistles are blowing  
as to warn the workers below

Overhead cranes  
groan at their burden

Workers scurry about  
to finish up their 8 hour shift  
they watch the clock,  
feeling the end is near

Workers, tired and stressed,  
console themselves quietly

At last a midnight has passed  
and cold beer awaits  
the hardened steel  
of their souls

— Phyllis Breit  
Calumet Township, Indiana



### Counting Cars while Waiting for a Man on his way to Pick me Up

He is coming for me, in the space between two cars. I could wait upstairs, watch television while the city drives past, but it's May and the tree in front of my building brushes plum-size shadows across the concrete steps. So I change my clothes and wait outside

because my world is too much black rayon and knee-high nylons, because it's spring and I've forgotten what it's like to watch and be watched from the front steps. I've forgotten what it's like to count cars as a way

to make waiting go faster—like when I was the last kid left standing outside school. I'd choose a number for my father, swear he'd be there before that many cars passed in front of me.

But I've never played this game in the city, never lived on a street where the stop lights control the pulse of traffic through my neighborhood. So I choose a high-rounded number and add seven. I crack my toes against the cool pores of concrete and remember what it's like to hear the man I wait for speak my name.

— Ronda Redmond  
Crystal, Minnesota

### Sweet Smells of Remembrance

Warm sticky vanilla ice-cream  
That drips from a dimpled chin  
The days of careless liberation  
When suns never set and wishing stars always shone  
Those rough-edged fingers brush gently  
The wisps of hair blind her for a moment  
What once was lost  
Suddenly blooms again here  
Where the wooden floor creaks a cordial welcoming  
And the breeze tickles the wind chimes to give in  
That hover over the still greasy smears on the wall  
Up the stairs she goes  
The taste of lemonade lingers on her tongue  
She breathes in the thick perfume  
Her body embraces it and holds it for a moment  
Laughter and cries shake her entire body  
Mischievous glances hiding behind the mirror  
Unruly hair tame against her sun-burnt cheeks  
Suddenly she begins to fly  
Outstretched translucent wings radiating with the sun  
Something she did not remember until now

— Sharon Ching  
Roslyn Heights, New York

### The Performer

Beautiful slim woman on stage,  
long flowing golden hair,  
pearl-white teeth,  
sky-blue eyes,  
tight revealing rhinestone uniform,  
blowing hard on saxophone,  
swaying with grace and  
keeping pace with rhythm,  
pure stunning beauty,  
smooth flawless performance,  
command the eyes,  
capture the mind,  
inspire the heart,  
rapture the ears.

— Darrell Perry  
Central City, Kentucky

### The Jilting

*Granny lay curled down within herself, amazed and watchful, staring at the point of light that was herself...*  
—Katherine Anne Porter

Back where her life used to be,  
Granny's bedroom fills with mist,  
clouding her image

of the woman brushing her hair,  
the man offering slippers. She turns,  
straining for a view of her old backyard

with its cherry blossoms in the spring,  
deep pink petunias all summer,  
marigolds well into fall.

Nor can she see the cocker spaniel  
poking its snout through the picket fence,  
the lanky boy running for a fly ball,

the small-boned girl setting the picnic table,  
the man solid in the hassock by the rose arbor.  
She blinks to clear her vision,

sees, at last, the multi-layered ribbon cake,  
all white and still poised at the banquet hall—  
a dream left waiting at the altar.

— Sandra Goldsmith  
Chicago, Illinois





*Photograph by Albert Matulewicz, Hammond, Indiana*



Y  
O  
U  
N  
G  
W  
R  
I  
T  
E  
R  
S

SHIRLEY JO MORITZ, EDITOR

Y  
O  
W  
R  
I  
T  
E  
R  
S

THIRTY TO FORTY. EDITOR





*Illustration by Amanda Diehl, Age 14, Merrillville, Indiana*



## My Dream

Ooohhhh,

that is one crusty,  
hard as a rock,  
white bone.  
I don't know whether to run from it  
or to catch and run with it,  
like a receiver catching a ball  
on a football field.

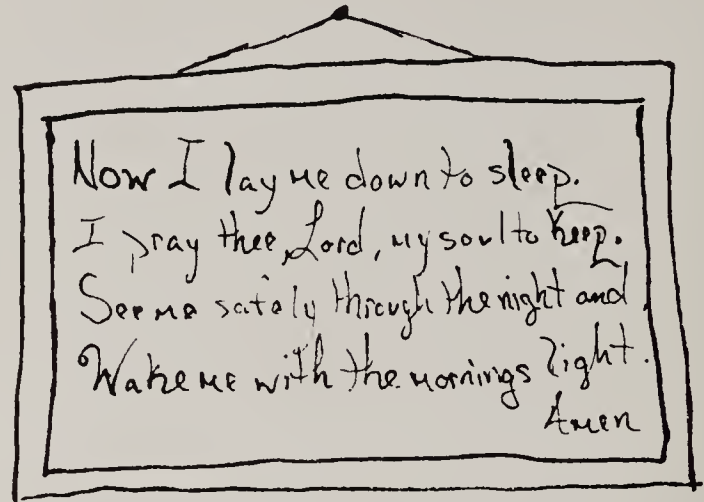
I am sitting here on the bench,  
in the Grant Park  
next to the long  
pine trees that wave in front of my face,  
like the girl's bangs waving before her eyes  
and all I can think about is that lusty,  
tasty,  
white bone  
that is laying next to the bulldog  
with sharp, white teeth.

I wish that I could only be  
stronger than that bully,  
but I am only a dumb,  
old,  
slow as a turtle terrier,  
and he is a strong,  
smart,  
fast as a bullet bully.

That bone to me is like  
sunshine to the world.  
The whole,  
wide,  
world.

It's my dream.  
My one and only dream.

— Margarita Lipovskaya, Grade 12  
Wheeling High School  
Wheeling, Illinois



## 5 A.M. Haiku

I

a single flower  
holds close the still white morning  
from a shadow's fist.

II

the moon blows gently  
on the sky's faint rib-wrinkles,  
smoothes them for the sun.

III

sun bounds out of bed  
freshly striped, pink-orange-blue:  
a crisp morning shirt.

— Betsy Allister, Age 16  
Lonsdale, Minnesota





## SEEIN' RED

by Ashlee Tiernan

The sky was still dark when Lilly got up. Today would be her first day working at Quizzer's Ice Cream Shop. She wasn't excited about working there because she hated all ice cream except chocolate. And she thought Mrs. Quizdon was a little weird. She was always talking about her red roses. But Quizzer's was the only place that had a "Now Hiring" sign in the window.

Finally, after brushing her teeth and getting dressed, Lilly left her house and started walking to work. On the way, she passed all of the trees and bushes that she saw every day. But today, they were especially beautiful. They were covered with pink, purple, and white flowers.

Something bright caught her eye. It was the biggest bush on the whole street. It was covered with flowers in the deepest shade of red. Lilly looked at the house and realized she was standing in front of Mrs. Quizdon's house. Funny, she thought, she had never noticed the red flowers on the bush before.

Lilly looked at her watch and hurried on to work. She didn't want to be late on her first

day. When she walked into the ice cream shop, Mrs. Quizdon was already standing behind the counter. Lilly sniffed the air. It smelled like roses. Evidently, Mrs. Quizdon liked rose-scented perfume a little too much.

Lilly opened the cover of the chocolate ice cream, hoping to get the smell of roses out of her nose. But that sickening rosy scent rushed out of the carton. It didn't even look like chocolate. It was red. All of the ice cream was red. This made her heart jump. She ran out of the shop. She really didn't care where she was going. She just wanted to get away from Quizzer's.

When she turned around to see how far she had gone, she saw a strange masked man in a red suit carrying a small, shiny object. Lilly froze. Her legs wouldn't move. The man walked over to a tree and touched it with the shiny thing. The tree instantly turned red.

Lilly forced the feelings back into her legs. But now she was too curious to run. She walked over to the strange man. He pointed the shiny object toward her and said, "Quizam."

Lilly looked at her hands and her clothes. She was all rose-colored. The man started to run away.

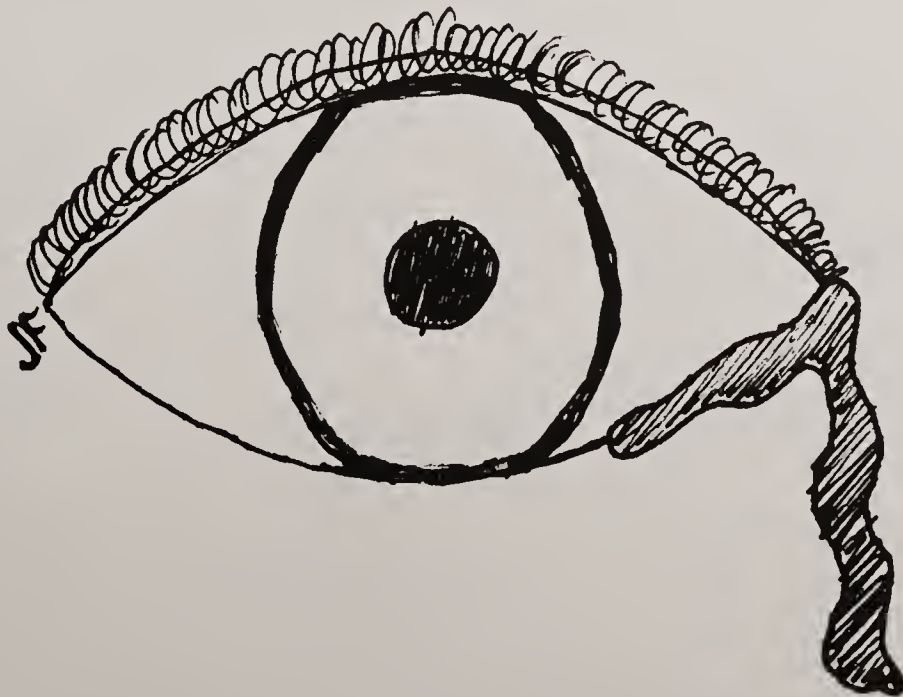
"Hey, wait a minute. You can't leave me like this!" Lilly yelled.

She ran after him and then took a short cut. She hid behind a tree. When he was near enough, she jumped out and tackled him. Then she ripped off his mask. "Mrs. Quizdon," she gasped.

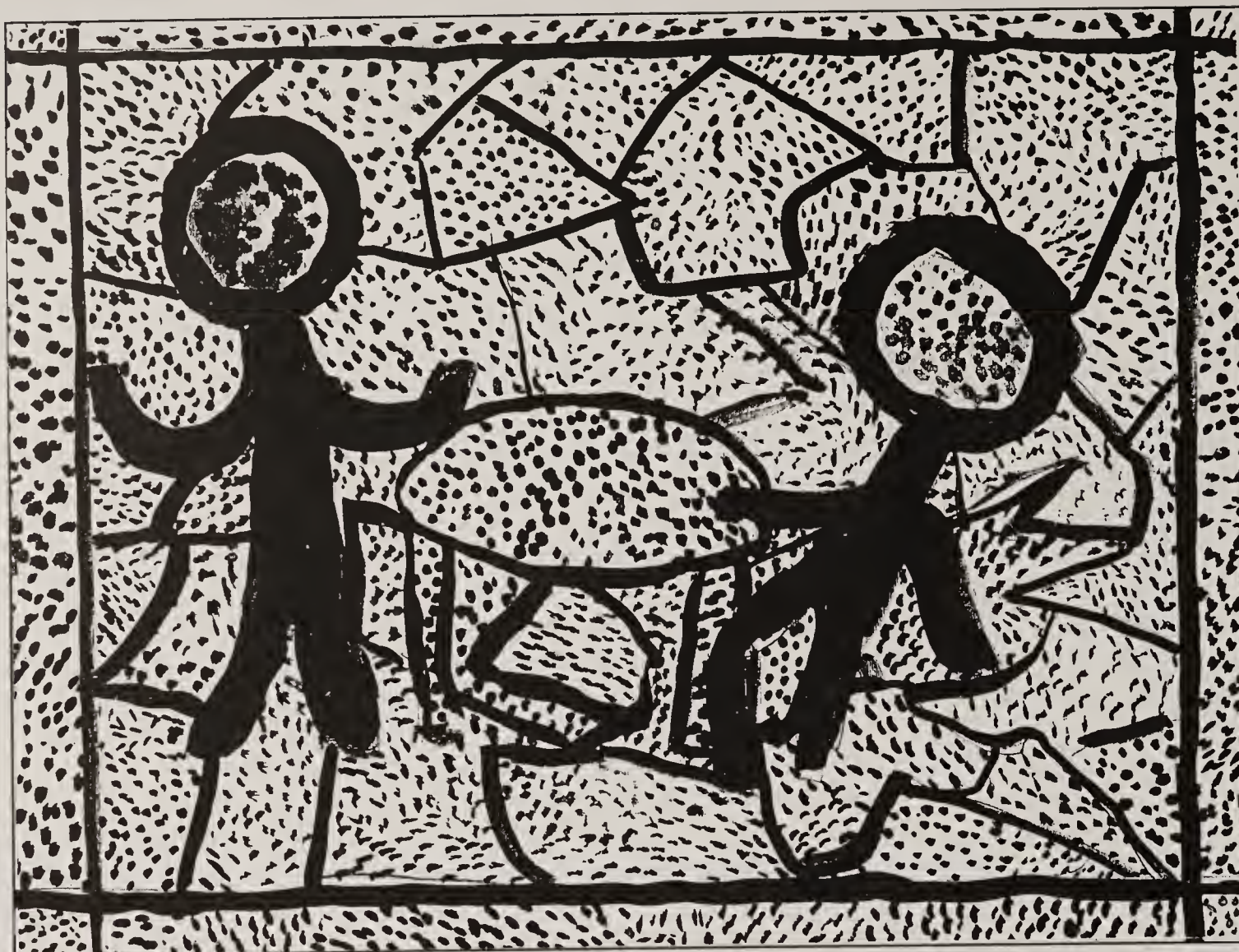
Lilly awoke with a start. She looked at her hands. They looked all right. She got up and started to get dressed. At first, she reached for her favorite red shirt, then changed her mind. She didn't want to take any chances. It was her first day of work at Quizdon's Ice Cream Parlor.

Ashlee Tiernan, Grade 5,  
attends Eisenhower Elementary  
in Dubuque, Iowa.

Illustrations on both pages  
by Jackie Fink, Age 15, Whiting, Indiana







*Illustration by Hannah Clendenen, Grade 4  
University Elementary, Bloomington, Indiana*

## Through My Mother's Eyes

She is sitting there, mending a shirt I have torn.  
I wonder what she is thinking about.  
It seems to me that she is a worker bee,  
she always has a new field of flowers to pollinate.  
Each flower, whether it be for work or for home,  
is systematically finished and nothing gets left out.

I think that if I were her,  
I would constantly be frantic,  
flit-flitting about the room in a crazy, stressful way  
not sitting there  
as calmly as a cat in the sun that knows it has done its duty.

Swish, swish, swish  
the needle flies through the fabric.  
Finally, I ask my wonderful mother what she is contemplating  
and she answers,  
"How much I love you."

That is why I love her back.

— Katherine Von Culin, Grade 7  
Germantown Academy  
Fort Washington, Pennsylvania

## Thank You

Unhappiness fell upon me  
When she left my life  
It was a matter of time  
Before I gave up  
Thinking about the things we've done.

My life was disgraceful  
Until you came to me  
You showed me where to go  
But I didn't want to believe  
My desire to kill myself  
Became very strong.

You stayed with me, and helped me  
My passion for you has grown  
Because of your help  
I thank you, I thank you  
With the help that I received  
From the bravery you showed  
It changed my life and destiny.

— Joshua Luke, Age 14  
Riviera Beach, Florida



## Treasures Left Behind

Swing hanging on the huge apple tree.  
Aroma of sweet pears filling the air.  
Taste of ruby, freshly picked  
strawberries from behind the barn.

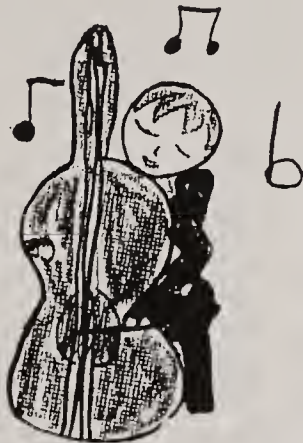
Playing in the garden full of wild  
flowers and apple trees.  
We lay on the long grass  
with our feet stretched out,  
staring into moving clouds.

Searching for hidden treasures  
around the pond and woods.  
Riding our bikes,  
pretending that they're cars,  
we chased each other around the village.

Now, it's the smell of gasoline  
from old, rusty cars.  
Loud motors of airplanes  
cutting up the sky.

And me,  
going over an old photo album  
over, and over again.

— *Jadwiga Kierys, Grade 12*  
*Wheeling High School*  
*Wheeling, Illinois*



## THUN-N-N-NDER

Thunder clap  
Scared  
Frightened  
Run to Dad's room  
With my flashlight  
Hide under the covers  
Shake  
Can't sleep  
BOOOOOOOOOOOOM  
Scared  
Frightened  
Mom and Dad are tired  
So am I

— *Brad Lee Hunter, Age 8*  
*Granger, Indiana*

## Silence

Driving down a road, alone, with her  
the one, my crush, my love  
No words, no movement, no breathing  
no sound  
The uncomfortable mood  
Nothing to say, nothing  
was there anything to do, anything at all?  
I could speak  
turn on the radio  
hold her hand  
The ice is growing too thick, someone must talk  
what should I say?  
Mumbles from my mouth, mumbles from her  
attempting to talk at the same time  
Small chuckles from both, silent again  
Confusion  
do I speak?  
does she want to?  
The rain is the only noise heard  
falling loudly on the car  
my heartbeat racing to the taps of the drops  
Driving down a road,  
a never ending road, alone  
With her

— *Randy Lerner, Grade 12*  
*Wheeling High School*



*Illustrations by Nicola Chavez, Grade 5*  
*University Elementary, Bloomington, Indiana*



## TUCKED IN A CLOUD

by Eleanor Wedell

**T**he space feels surreal, with lace curtains icing the wall. The pale light gazes in as if it were fighting to stay, but it knows it has to fade. All I hear is the sound of chirping crickets.

As I walk in, there is a head sticking out from under the covers of one of the two beds. The other is neatly made, as always, with blue hearts edging every corner. The room puts you in a cloud. You can almost taste the fresh scent of it. The curtains flutter from the blow of the wind, as a flame does right before it's out, dancing with the

wind, flailing and trying to get out of the wind's way so it can have a rest. But the wind keeps it dancing.

My eyes suddenly shoot to the girl. Then I calm; I have not wakened her. With a sigh of relief, I decide to leave, so to avoid waking her from her peaceful slumber. As I leave, I whisper in the tiniest voice, "Good night."

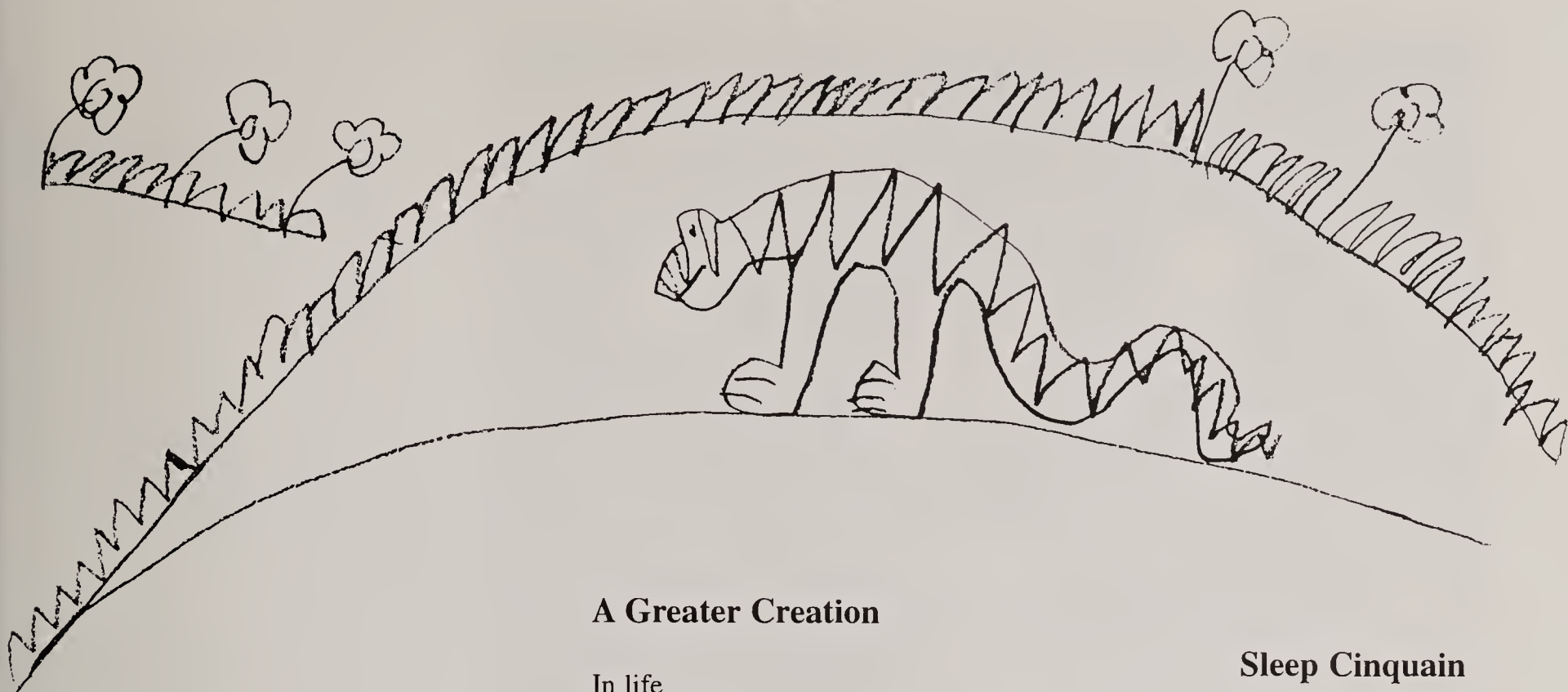
And as I leave, I hear, in another tiny voice that nearly imitates my own, "Good night."

*Eleanor Wedell, Age 12,  
lives in Abington, Pennsylvania.*



*Illustrations by Taylor Roy, Age 9  
Munster, Indiana*





### A Greater Creation

In life  
I am no more  
than a splotch of color  
but joining the rainbow  
I can soar through  
the skies.

In life  
I am no more  
than a raindrop  
through which  
the light shines  
to make  
a greater creation.

— Kirsty Lawson, Age 11  
San Rafael, California

### Sleep Cinquain

Blue notes,  
Electric pulse,  
Dart lightly through me, jolt  
me from sweet viscous honey sleep.  
Wake up!

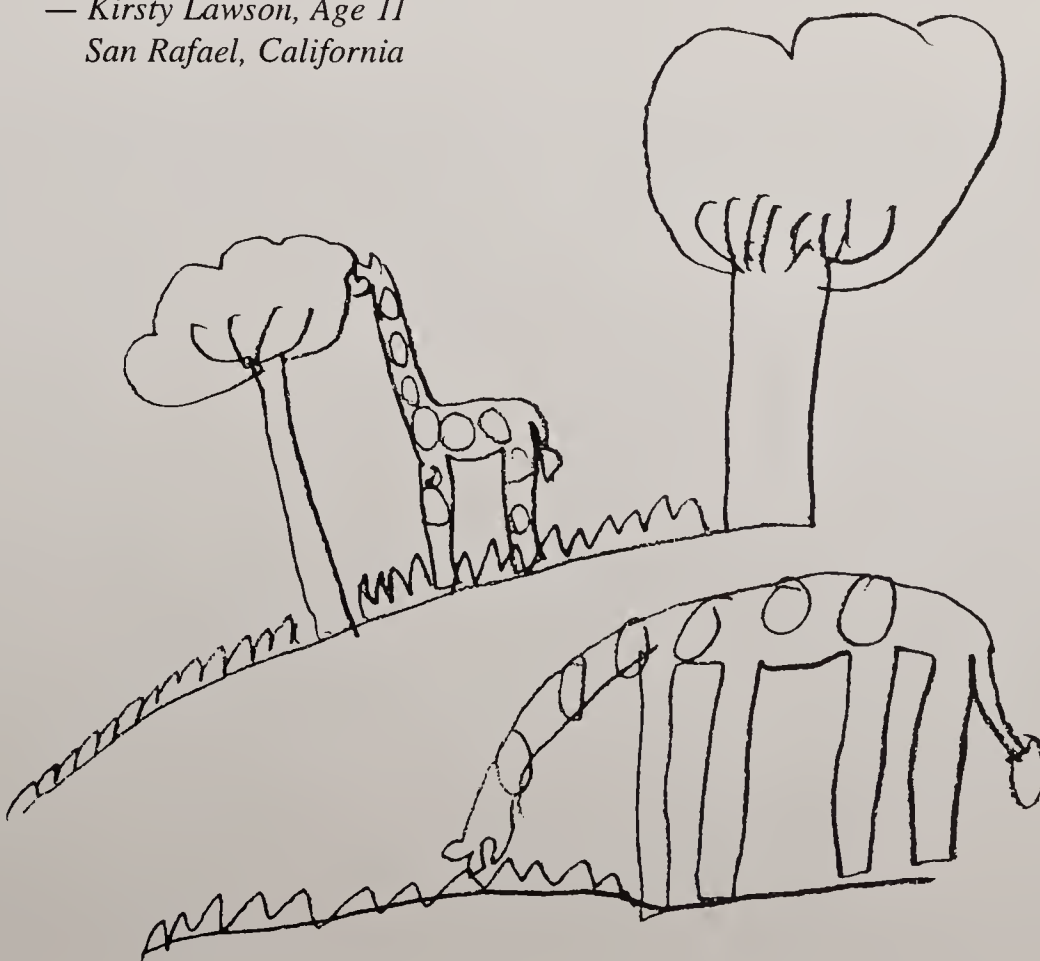
— Betsy Allister, Age 16  
Lonsdale, Minnesota

### I Wish I Had Wings

I wish I had wings  
With feathers white as snow,  
To take me anywhere,  
Wherever I wanted to go.  
I wish I had wings  
That were as light as air,  
To float from place to place,  
Free of any care.

I wish I had wings  
That folded on my back,  
And when I was ready to leave,  
They wouldn't give me slack.  
Wings as gentle as an angel's touch,  
Wings with a golden shine,  
But not dull wings like mine!

— Elena Duralde, Age 13  
Woodward Academy  
College Park, Georgia



Illustrations by Hanbit Lee, Grade 2  
University Elementary, Bloomington, Indiana





*Seated Row, left to right:*  
Sarah Fogarty, Courtney Coriell, Maggie Gibson,  
Julia Campbell, Gage Heyburn, Kevin Allen.  
*Middle Row:*  
Carson Jones, Shawn Fugate, II, Annie Herold,  
Kevin Dunn, Megan Coffey.  
*Back Row:*  
Alec Germond, Brian Case, Nicholas Beehler,  
Eric Damiana, Autumn Fisher.

*Skylark* received thirty-one submissions from students attending North Oldham Middle School in Goshen, Kentucky. These essays reflect a variety of interesting themes that seem to express what our American youth thinks are important today. My reading staff and I found six of these prose pieces to be especially representative of the candor and enthusiasm of all the submissions. Consequently, we offer them here with only minor editing so the voices of these students are heard in their original style.

In addition, to recognize the creativity and fine work of all thirty-one students submitting their thoughts, we are featuring two color group photos of them to accompany the six essays. We are excited about this "sub-section" in our Young Writers' section and hope that *Skylark* readers will enjoy the essays and photos, too.



*Seated Row, left to right:*  
Megann Valentine, Lauren Powell, Ben Shirrell,  
Chris Payton, Nicole Sumner.  
*Middle Row:*  
Brian Sterrett, Kyle Johnson, Caitlin Papovich,  
Ashley Whitehouse.  
*Back Row:*  
David Stapperfenne, Josh Kirchner,  
Wesley Schal, Katie Siler, Holly Overcash.





## MY CRAZY GRANDMA

*by Courtney Coriell, Age 12*

**H**h, goodness!" I said to myself as we pulled into the driveway of my grandma's house. I knew that as soon as the car door slammed shut, she would fly out the front door and say the usual, "Come over here and give your ol' Grandma Barbara some sugar." In Crazy Grandma Translation: "Come over here and give me a hug and a kiss." I would then hesitantly drag my feet over to my grandma, and she would throw her arms up in the air and then lower them to give me a big hug. Then, right on my cheek, she would plant one of those big, wet, sloppy kisses. After that, she would turn to my sister to do the same. I would quickly wipe my cheek before she could notice.

Well, of course as soon as I got out of the car, she popped her head out the door to make sure it was us. And when she saw that it was, she excitedly skipped down her porch stairs to greet us. Just as I had predicted, she said, "Give your ol' Grandma Barbara some sugar!" I did, and everyone else did after me.

This time our visit with my grandma was a little different, though. It was becoming clear that my grandma was getting more and more confused. Since she had had a stroke last year, her mind hasn't exactly been the same.

This started to become obvious one night in the living room. My mom, my sister, my friend, Afton, my grandma, and I were all watching TV when a commercial came on. My grandma just loves talking. So, she started up a conversation with my mom.

"You know what? Our dog is going to have puppies!"

My mom replied, "Oh, really? That's great!"

After that, the conversation went on about this and that, and I really didn't pay much attention. But about an hour later, during a commercial, my grandma started saying, "Debbie, you know our dog, Lady, is going to have pups!"

My mom, with a puzzled look on her face, just played along with my grandma and said, "Oh, wow."

After the conversation went on for a while, my grandma announced that it was time for dinner. As we all sat around the table, everybody was listening to whatever anyone had to say when my grandma turned to my mom and said, "Hey, Debbie, you know Lady is going to have puppies in December. Have I mentioned that yet?"

My mom, a little sarcastically, said, "You might've mentioned it a few times."

Throughout our stay there, she mentioned it to my mom quite a few more times.

Another thing that persuaded me to think that my grandma was getting more forgetful was one day we were again in the living room just talking. My grandma started telling Afton, my sister, and me this story about a man who proposed to my aunt Donna. My mom looked very confused during the whole story. Finally, she said, "Are you sure this is a true story, Mom? I don't ever remember hearing about this from Donna."

But my grandma continued, by stating, "Oh, yeah! Well, this guy came up to your aunt Donna's house and proposed to her right then and there, and he said, 'Donna, will you marry me?'—this part is so funny—Donna said, 'No!' "

Well, all of us kind of chuckled with little fake laughs, even though we didn't really think it was all that funny. But my grandma just started laughing hysterically, while we just sat there watching her with weird looks on our faces. Then my grandma had to leave the room to go do something. As soon as she left, my mom started explaining to us that she'd never even heard of the guy that my grandma was talking about, let alone the story itself.

Despite all of my grandma's cookiness [sic], I still love her very much. She's been there throughout my whole life. But the funniest thing about the matter is—my mom is starting to act like my grandma, and she hasn't even had a stroke!



## FIRST FLIGHT (Maybe Last?)

by Maggie Gibson, Age 12

I felt queasy while I tried to choke down my breakfast at the airport. The ride there had been long enough. How long were my parents going to torture me like this? What would I have to do to get myself out of this situation? I started to ponder ways that I could escape this treacherous way of transportation. Maybe, I thought to myself, I could suggest that we skip the airplane ride and take a bus.

"It's time we go to the plane. We should be boarding soon," my mom said. Unluckily for me, there weren't any minutes to spare when we reached the ticket check-in.

I was so nervous when we boarded the plane that my palms were all sweaty. My mom told us all to stay close as we boarded the plane and as we waited to get to our seats. When we were seated, I turned to look at my little sisters. They were calm and relaxed, but I was sitting there just waiting for something to go wrong. I could feel my stomach churning around and around like a whirlpool. My forehead was getting warmer every minute I sat and waited for my worst fear to happen—the plane to crash. I was only in the fifth grade, and I was afraid that I was going to die on a plane.

Just the night before, I had been watching the news. They mostly focused on a recent plane crash. This wasn't the thing that scared me the most. The worst news was that this plane crash that had happened was on a plane that belonged to the airline that we were to ride on the next day.

I had managed to slip this bit of information to my mom when I sat down beside her on the plane. Truthfully, I had to make her sit with me because I was so scared to be alone without an adult to hold my hand. I preferred one of my parents to hold my hand. I was practically giving myself a heart attack. I started to breathe very fast, in quick, short breaths. I was willing to make myself sick just to get off this plane.

Suddenly, the pilot's voice came over the intercom. "We will be leaving in about five minutes and, as a safety precaution, we ask that you put your seat belts on and keep them on this entire plane ride to Chicago. Thank you."

Okay, I thought to myself, I have about five minutes to get off this plane. Maybe I can act like I'm sick or something; make myself throw up in the plane's bathroom.

At that very moment, my thoughts were cut off. We were moving. The plane was moving; I was going to die! I felt like I actually was going to die because I started thinking about everyone who was important to me and how much I loved my family. I freaked out so badly that I grabbed onto the person next to me and refused to let go. Unfortunately for her, that person was my mom. She spent most of the time while we were rising in the air to pry my hand off her arm. When I finally let go, my mom told me that it was all over. We were already up in the air and about half-way to Chicago.

That isn't so bad, I thought to myself. I guess the guy who said, "There is nothing to fear but fear itself," was right.

*Editor's Note: Maggie Gibson's essay was selected before the terrorists' attacks on September 11, 2001.*





## KAITLYN

*by Nicole Sumner, Age 13*

**I**t was January 17th at 12:02 in the morning. I was lying on the rough, blue sofa that was scraping against my check. Our family had accumulated more junk food in the world over the past few hours. My nephew sat exhausted and full on his soft, blue chair. It seemed like days before the nurse came in.

"You may come in the patient's room now," she said, looking at us with a smile.

As we entered the room, the smell of hospital food and sweat came rushing at my face. The room was lit only by the lamp by the bed, and the light danced around the room until it caught sight of my sister. Her face was pale and sweaty. There were many expressions as she held a little blessing in her arms.

The angel's face, tinted pink, curled up as the surrounding blanket engulfed her like the wind. Her nose was off-color and as small as a letter key on the computer. Little eyes blinked gently as the new world approached her. The head was round and had a little hair. Her head looked like a peach that was pink and round. Her lips turned about in a circle as she looked around at the new world gazing at her. Her chubby cheeks looked like the reddest rose in the garden. Her fingers were plump and small. They had the littlest fingernails, and her body was the tint of a newly-born pig. Her body, covered with the multi-colored blanket, looked like a doll.

"Seven pounds, four ounces," my sister said.

After a moment of looking around, this angel's hand reached out for the first available hand. That was mine. As she grabbed my hand, her fingers just covered up my nail. It seemed impossible that anyone could be that small and adorable.

When it was my turn to hold her, she started moving. She smiled—not an ordinary smile—but one as warm as the fire on Christmas Eve. Her eyes were soft and calm and, if you looked a little closer, they glittered as if the night skies were in them. Her hand reached in the air to get my face. Her hands were clammy and warm. Her eyes peered around until they got up at me. Her face was off-color and her eyes widened. Seeing that was really funny. Here was this angel that God had sent down, lying in my arms. Was this really happening? Her hand tickled my cheek and moved up to my nose and stopped at my mouth. She had a bewildered look on her face.

As her eyes warmed my heart, new responsibilities started to run through my brain. Will she be able to come to me for anything that she can't talk to anyone else about? Come to me when she is sad or scared from a movie or story that she has heard, or when she just doesn't know what to do? Come to me when she needs help on her homework? (I will try to help her even if I don't understand it, either.) Come to me when she wants to tell a secret and she can't trust anyone else? Come to me when she first gets her heart broken and is too embarrassed to tell anyone, or when she needs a friend when no one else is there?

Do you know how it feels to have someone push you to be the best you can be? Someone you want to set a good example for? I know how it feels—now.



## THE CURE FOR SADNESS

*by Kyle Melton, Age 12*

**I** think my dog could understand when I was sad, mad, happy and so on. He always seemed to know what would cheer me up. I always thought of him as my best friend. My dog is the best dog in the world. He is brown, white and black with some blue speckles. His name is Pepper. He is not very fat and, on all fours, he is about one and one-half feet tall.

"I can't believe my hamster died," I whined. "I've already buried him. There is nothing else to do but play with my dog."

When I got down to his dog house, he was patiently waiting for me to take him off his chain. He walked along with me on our way to the woods as I explained to him about my hamster's death.

"Pepper, my hamster died today," I explained to him.

My mind was slow from the sadness. Trying to pick words was like picking the door that has one million dollars behind it. Pepper stopped and looked at me. What is he thinking, I thought? Then, all of a sudden, he started running for the woods, looking back like telling me to follow. Finally, when I caught him, we started to play wrestling. We played all the way down the hill. Then he stopped. He saw something. It was a squirrel. We chased it and chased it. I had so much fun that I forgot about my hamster.

Another time that I was sad was when we were going away for two weeks. I went and got my dog and I lay down with him to watch the clouds.

"Pepper, I'm going to leave for a couple of weeks. I'll miss you," I said sadly. He lay on his back with his paws in the air.

When I finished talking to him, I started to get up, but he wouldn't let me. He started playing, and we ended up rolling across the field and having so much fun that leaving was further away from my mind than Hong Kong.

The next time I was sad was when my best friend was moving away. I was sitting in the yard, and Pepper started barking. So, I let him off his chain. Then when I sat back down, he sat right beside me.

"Pepper, my best friend is moving away," I told him. "I can't believe it."

Pepper acted just like he understood, and that helped a lot!

Now, he is with my great uncle, being trained to hunt raccoon. I hope that one day we will be reunited because this makes me sad, and he is my only cure for sadness. I do not know what I will do without him.





## A DAY I WILL REMEMBER FOREVER

by Carson Jones, Age 12

**I** will never forget the day my mom and dad brought home a special surprise. You see, my favorite sport is baseball. In fact, I have played baseball since I was a baby. My mom says that my first word was *ball*. So, when my mom came home from work and told me that we had front row seats to see the Louisville Riverbats, I was so happy. It would have been a great day. But then my dad told me there was something more. I had been given the opportunity to represent my mom's work and throw the first pitch out just before the game. My mom does the commercials for the big screen at the stadium, so that's probably why we got the tickets.

It seemed like the day would never come. But it finally did. It was a warm, beautiful August night, the weekend before school started. In fact, it was the weekend before my birthday. I was wearing a yellow shirt with small writing on it and a pair of beige shorts. I was nervous thinking about throwing the ball. What if I could not throw the ball over the home plate? I knew, if I were to be playing in just a regular game with no pressure, it would be easy to throw the ball over the plate. But it wasn't.

I saw a few of my friends at the game, and all of my family was there. My mom was videotaping and my grandmother and my uncle were taking pictures. There was also a professional photographer. That was when I got really excited and nervous at the same time because, if I did bad, there would be a picture to prove I did badly.

We walked up on the field as the loud speaker announced, "And now to throw out the pitch, Carson Jones." When the announcer said my name, cold chills ran from my head to my toes in seconds, and I got goosebumps all over. I took the long walk to the pitcher's mound, and as I looked up I saw fifteen thousand people all looking at me. There was a man who walked up to me and dropped a ball in my hands. I took the ball, walked to the mound and looked at the catcher. The man whispered, "Whenever you are ready, go ahead."

I knew I would never be ready, but I knew I had to do it. So I got ready. I felt the laces on the ball, looked at my dad who was trying to mess me up, then I looked at the catcher. I saw all the cameras, too.

"Go ahead," the catcher urged. I tried to forget where I was and just pitch like I do in regular games. But how could I go ahead when there were thousands of people hovering over me, waiting for me to throw the ball?

I wiped the sweat from my eyes and got ready. I lifted my leg and threw the ball and in seconds I knew it was right down the middle. I did it! Everyone was clapping. The catcher ran out on the field, and I got my picture taken with him.

"Play ball," yelled the umpire.

The team ran onto the field as I was walking off. I had done it. I threw a perfect pitch—a strike right over home plate.



## TO HOLD, TO HAVE, AND TO LOVE

by Ben Shirrell, Age 12

**D**oris, I'm home!" I holler, as I run through the open door. Doris is my baby sitter and she is about 54 years old. She has red hair, glasses, she is tall, kind of chubby, and has a limp body shape. Doris has arthritis, but that has never stopped her from being the woman she is to me. She is so kind and loving to me and always shares her warmth. We have great times together. Every day I come through the door to Doris, and her open arms greet me with a big hug.

I was seven years old, and do you have any idea how much trouble and mischief seven-year-olds can get into? Well, a lot more than you can imagine. I was always getting into mischief every day. Early one Tuesday morning, I woke up at about 8:30 am.

"Oh, no! I'm late for school," I screamed. I slid into my raggy pants and my red tee shirt, grabbed my backpack and headed downstairs.

To my surprise, Doris, my brother and my sister were all sitting there. I ran over and hugged Doris, and then I asked her, "Why are we not at school?"

She said, "Snow day."

I turned around and glared out the window and to my surprise there was at least two feet of snow. I put on my jacket and boots and headed out the door. As I ran out the door to play in the snow, I noticed there was ice on the sidewalk. I ran and slid across the ice, and then I fell and busted my head on the ground.

"Ahhhhhhhh!" I screamed.

Doris ran out and saw me crying. So, she picked me up and took me back inside. I felt better after a while. Doris was there making me feel better, telling me some jokes and saying comforting things. This might not sound like I was getting into a lot of mischief or anything. But this incident showed that, when I was hurt, she was there sharing her warmth and comforting me.

The next day school was canceled again. Instead of going out and hurting myself again, I went to Doris's house to stay for the day. We cuddled in her bed and watched TV together. Doris is just like a big teddy bear. She is loveable, cuddly, and you love to hold her tight through bad times. I fell asleep very quickly because Doris was there. I woke up and glanced around. As I peered out the window, I noticed it was slightly dark outside. I was in my room and remembered that I had fallen asleep at Doris's house. I went downstairs and saw that Doris wasn't there. I asked my dad how I had gotten home, and he told me he had picked me up on his way home from work. Then I felt a tear run down my cheek.

"You mean I didn't even get to say good-bye?" I asked sadly.

"You weren't awake," my dad said.

"I miss her," I yelled frantically. "I am not going to see her until tomorrow," I screamed, and then ran to my room. My dad knew it wasn't the end of the world for me. He also knew how much I loved and cared for Doris.

I love Doris with all my heart, and she is always my sunshine on a cloudy day. She teaches me and guides me through my life like a parent. There are good times and there are bad times. There are also fun times and boring times. If I could give an award to Doris, it would be, *Most Loved*, by me. Sometimes, I wonder what it would be like without Doris and what I would be like. But I know as long as she is here, I will make the best of our times together.





*Illustration by Caitlin VanKooten, Grade 6, University Elementary, Bloomington, Indiana*



Illustration by Jackie Fink, Age 15, Whiting, Indiana



### When I Grow Up

When I grow up I want to be a ballerina  
 With bright lights shining on my face  
 Or a hockey player checked into the boards  
 Or a scuba diver exploring the deep sea  
 Or an author writing a new novel  
 Or a doctor curing patients one by one  
 Or a scientist cloning fluffy sheep  
 Or a teacher with a big red shiny apple upon my desk  
 These are all very good plans for my future  
 But what I want to be the most is  
 Something above all and it is  
 ME!!

— Erin Splan, Grade 3  
 Ardmore School  
 Villa Park, Illinois

### The Girl In My Neighborhood

One day I was sitting in my room  
 Thinking of all the things I could do in my life.  
 Then my mama come to me,  
 Saying, "Kendra, Kendra, Kendra,  
 Come here."  
 Then I say,  
 "Wait, Mama, wait, Mama,  
 I can run in the lovely sun.  
 I can drink the lovely water.  
 Run through the beautiful flowers.  
 Sit in this comfortable chair  
 With my legs crossed around,  
 With my book in my nice little lap."  
 It was my favorite little book  
 I ever wrote, ever wrote, ever wrote—  
*The Girl In My Neighborhood.*  
 It was a good book to me,  
 Mmm, mmm, mmm.  
 It was dedicated to my mama.  
 Oh yeah, did she love that book,  
 She say, "Come over here, girl,  
 Give your mama a big old hug."  
 So I say, "Mama, wait a minute,  
 Sit here with me and help me  
 Think about the times we had,  
 Sister girl, Black women together."  
 Mama and me,  
 Sitting in my room,  
 Thinking about all the things  
 We could do in life.

— Kendra Williams, Grade 4  
 Leif Ericson School  
 Chicago, Illinois





## THE BIRTHDAY

by Chloe Zimmerman

Rachel, I know this is difficult, but we just can't have a party for you this year. Your father's salary cut and the new baby are too much for us to deal with financially and emotionally," sighed Mrs. Jacobs while stroking her daughter's auburn hair.

Rachel knew they were tight on money, especially after the addition onto their house last month for her new baby sister, Kristy. That was all right with her. But she couldn't believe that her parents weren't even going to let her have a birthday party. It seemed to Rachel that ever since Kristy had come eight months before, her parents had completely forgotten about her.

Fighting back the tears coming to her eyes, Rachel nodded. She pulled the covers more tightly around her.

"I'm so sorry, but there isn't anything I can do right now. I will make it up to you somehow," her mother promised. A loud wailing sounded from the nursery across the hall. Mrs. Jacobs jumped off the bed instantly and hurried out of the room. "Good night, Rachel!" she called over her shoulder as she turned off the light.

"Good night," Rachel whispered into the darkness.



Rachel slid into her desk the next morning, just as the bell rang. She pulled out her homework from the night before.

"I will be coming around and collecting your descriptive paragraphs about a particular object," her teacher, Miss Blackwell, informed the class. "Be good and wait your turn!" She straightened her skirt and smiled at the children.

When she came to Rachel's desk, she glanced at her paper before picking it up.

"A ten-speed mountain bike; I suppose you have one," Miss Blackwell mused.

"I wish I did," Rachel replied thoughtfully. "My birthday is this week and I hope to get

one!"

"I'm sure your paragraph will be fascinating," Miss Blackwell assured her as she walked on to the next desk.

Rachel looked across the room at her friend Laura. She was carefully checking over her paragraph, twisting one of her sandy-brown curls pensively. As if she could tell she was being watched, she looked up immediately. When she saw Rachel, her face broke into a bright smile that reflected into her huge blue eyes.

"What did you write about?" she mouthed.

"A ten-speed mountain bike," Rachel replied in the same fashion. "Is that what you told your parents to get you for your birthday?" Laura asked silently. Rachel nodded just as Miss Blackwell walked right between them.

Laura leaned as far forward as she could so her face was visible again. "What?" she asked once more. Rachel laughed, but her smile quickly faded. "I'll talk to you after school," she replied mutely, and then turned back to her notebook.



Rachel waited for Laura at their lockers after school, as usual. She heaved her backpack onto her shoulder, wavering until she regained her balance. She walked back to the classroom, nearly bumping into Laura as she came out.

"Sorry I'm late! I just had to ask Miss Blackwell about doing some extra credit. I got an 82 on the math test and I don't think my parents are going to be happy," she explained nonchalantly. Rachel smiled and said it was fine.

Rachel had always been the one who cared about grades. Actually, she and Laura were different in a lot of ways, but they had always been best friends. They really understood each other. That is why she was sure that Laura would understand about the party.

"So what did you want to tell me?" Laura asked as she dropped her books onto the

floor. Her eyes searched Rachel's face questioningly.

Rachel knelt down alongside her friend and helped her pack up. "My parents said I can't have a party this year," she muttered.

"You've got to be kidding me! Are you in trouble or something?" Laura exclaimed as she swung her backpack onto her shoulder. She hopped down the stairs, still talking.

"I mean, isn't the first double-digit birthday one of the most important?" she inquired.

Rachel followed her to the door. "I know," she agreed. "Listen, can you help me think of a way to make my mom change her mind?"

They opened the heavy door and walked into the sunlight. They made their way home, coming up with ridiculous ways to get her parents to let her have a party. They parted on Maple Street, still laughing.

"Don't worry, I'll help you get them to say yes. Seriously!" Laura swore.

As Rachel walked down the last street alone she thought more about what Laura had said. It was reassuring to think about how caring her friend was, but it obviously wasn't going to happen. Once her parents said no about something, that was it.

Nearing her house, Rachel ran under the red maples up to her front door. She reached for the doorbell, but then thought the better of it. She stuck her hand into the front pocket of her backpack and groped around for the key her parents had given her. "It's so you won't wake the baby when you come home," her parents had explained. *Everything my parents do is for the baby now*, Rachel thought as she jammed the key into the lock.

She opened the door slowly and looked inside. In the kitchen, her mother was talking on the phone, so she decided to sit at the table and wait for her to finish. Mrs. Jacobs was facing the other way and so she didn't hear her daughter come into the room. She continued talking.

"Yes, this Friday at 2:30...okay...I'll talk to





you soon. Bye!" She hung up the phone and turned around. She jumped at the sight of Rachel.

"You...you scared me, sweetie!" she stut-tered. She walked over to Rachel and gave her a hug. "Would you like some cookies? They are just about done."

"What were you talking about?" Rachel pressed.

"What do you mean?"

"On the phone."

"Oh...I was just talking to our friends, the Rodmans...your father and I are going to the theater with them this week," her mother explained slowly.

"Friday is my birthday," Rachel reminded her, focusing her deep brown eyes on an ant skittering across the linoleum floor. She looked up uncertainly at her mother. Mrs. Jacobs walked over to the stove to check on the cookies.

"Oh, I'm sorry, honey. I completely forgot! If you really want, we can cancel on them, although it *has* been planned for the longest time..." Mrs. Jacobs said hesitantly. She didn't sound like she meant it, and Rachel didn't want to force her to do something she didn't want to.

"It's okay," Rachel responded as she resorted to studying the ant again. Her mother began scraping the cookies off the tray and onto a platter. The rich smell engulfed their tiny kitchen.

"You're such a perfect child, Rachel. If you'd like, you can invite Laura over to spend the afternoon with you on Friday," her mother answered. "Would you like a chocolate chip cookie?" Rachel did. However, she wanted ten times more to just be alone. She shook her head and ran upstairs to her room, slamming the door.



What seemed like ages later, Rachel heard a knock on her door. She pretended not to notice, and concentrated her eyes more deeply on the book in her hands. A second knock sounded, and the door slowly replied with a creak. Rachel's mother peeked in.

"Rachel, your father and I are going out and the baby-sitter is going to be late. Would you mind watching the baby for a while?" Mrs. Jacobs inquired. She caught Rachel's eyes and smiled tentatively. Rachel snapped her head back down. Her eyes penetrated the pal-

lid words in front of her. *How can my mother act like nothing is wrong?* she wondered angrily.

"Rachel, will you answer me?" Mrs. Jacobs asked patiently.

"Fine," Rachel mumbled, refusing to lift her stare from the words swimming in front of her.

"Thank you, honey," Mrs. Jacobs sighed as she closed the door. "We'll just be next door, and the baby-sitter will be here in an hour."

Rachel sat with the book heavy in her hands until she heard the front door shut and the lock turn. Immediately, a loud wailing sounded from the nursery across the hall. Rachel didn't budge. She wished Kristy would just disappear, and wondered if that might come true if she was left sobbing for long enough. Rachel couldn't see how her parents could be so oblivious. *They didn't even try to find out if I had any other plans,* she thought. *All they care about is their precious baby.*

The crying continued for the next ten minutes, the volume escalating immensely. Rachel finally let out an exasperated groan and stood up. She ran across the hall towards the sobbing. *I'm just doing this for myself,* Rachel assured herself as she entered the nursery to answer Kristy's cries.



The rest of the week went even worse than Rachel expected. Laura suddenly didn't want to help her convince her parents to let her have a party. Actually, Laura seemed to be avoiding her. Friday was the worst. Her parents got her to school without remembering to wish her a happy birthday. Laura avoided her more than ever, and now it seemed like other kids in the class were ignoring her, too. Miss Blackwell remembered to have the class sing to her, but none of her friends even glanced her way.

At three o'clock she and Laura walked out of school together. Rachel noticed a red Altima that looked familiar parked nearby on the street.

"That car looks exactly like your mom's!" she pointed out to Laura.

"It is my mom's," Laura replied uncomfortably. "She was going to be home early today so she said she wanted to pick me up. So, I'll see you later I guess. Bye!" She ran down to the car and hopped in. As the car

pulled out, Laura didn't even wave goodbye to Rachel.

Rachel went home by herself. She walked very slowly because she remembered that no one would be home to greet her except her little sister and the baby-sitter. She thought she remembered her mom asking their friends to pick them up at 2:30 when her mom was talking on the phone a few days before.

Once she got to her house, she walked increasingly more slowly under the red maples that had dropped their very first leaves, welcoming fall. She bit back tears and made her way to the door. She took out her key and unlocked it. When she got inside, the lights were off. Rachel guessed that the baby-sitter was upstairs with Kristy. She reached for the light switch and blinked as her eyes adjusted to the brightness.

"Surprise!!!"

Rachel jumped and looked around. There were balloons everywhere. A big, colorful banner was hung across the ceiling bearing the word SURPRISE!!! Everyone was there: her parents, Kristy, her neighbors, Laura, and all of her other friends from school. Her mother ran up to her and gave her a huge hug.

"Did you actually think we wouldn't let you have a party?" she asked. "So, what do you think?" Rachel was in such a daze she could hardly tell what was going on. *'So they do care about me; they were planning this all along!'* she thought to herself as a big grin spread across her face. She felt a momentary flutter of guilt pass through her as she realized how she had doubted her parents' love for her. She looked around at all the smiling faces and felt their kindness fill a recent void in her heart.

Laura ran up to her and smiled apologetically. "Sorry if you thought I really didn't care about your birthday," she said ruefully. Rachel just smiled. It felt so good to know she had a best friend again.

"Everyone sit down!" Rachel's mother yelled above the din. "It's time for cake." Rachel ran to the head seat and smiled at Laura as she sat down next to her. She looked down at Kristy, who was crawling underneath the table. Guilt swam over her as she remembered how she had neglected her sister the last time she had baby-sat. She felt that she would understand if Kristy never forgave her. And, as if she could sense Rachel's glance, Kristy wobbled in an effort



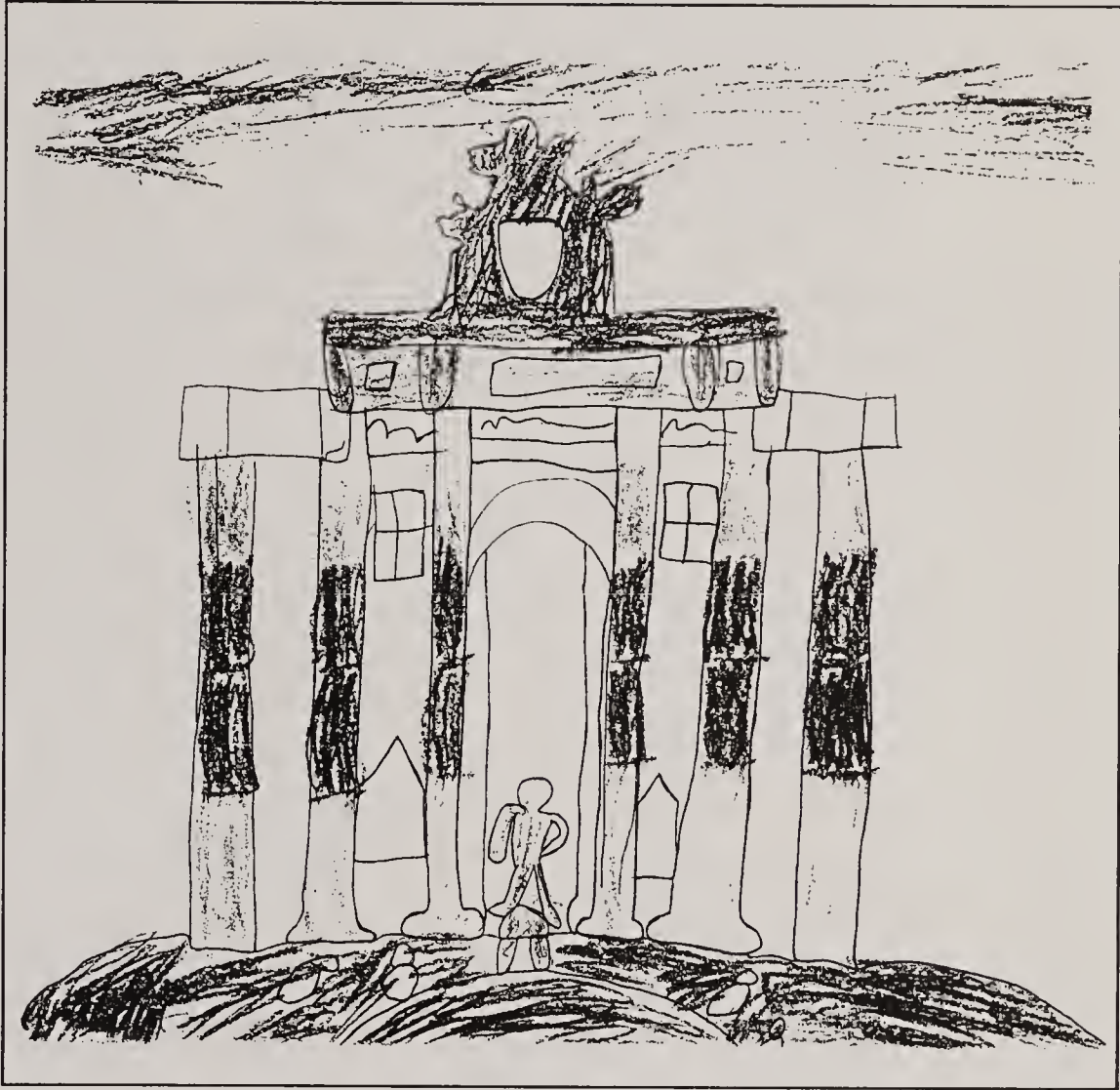


to raise her head. She saw Rachel and a huge, toothless grin swept over her rosy cheeks. Rachel felt sunshine spread over her. She bent down, scooped up her sister, and placed her on her lap. She looked up just in time to see her mother bring out a cake. She looked around at her friends and family singing to her, and smiled a smile that traveled through her body like electricity.

"Make a wish!" Laura exclaimed. Rachel's eyes lingered on the frosted cake for a moment. She admired the delicate pink trim. The eleven shining candles, one for good luck, blurred as she tried to think of something to wish for. Rachel couldn't think of anything she wanted more than just enjoying her party right now. She blew out the candles and began to cut the cake.

"Wait! There is one more thing!" her father shouted. He walked over to the closet and pulled out a big box. Rachel knew what it was before she even opened it. Her wish had been answered even though she hadn't actually remembered to wish for it. She ran over to the box and ripped off the paper. She was right: It was a ten-speed mountain bike.

*Illustration by Harry Gaebler, Grade 2  
University Elementary, Bloomington, Indiana*



*Chloe Zimmerman, Age 13,  
lives in Pleasantville, New York.*

### **Huge But Not Really**

Standing in front of it  
Looking up, and it  
Disappears in the sky  
Very high.

Pack my stuff  
For a big journey  
I'm scared, and old  
But inside I know I can do it.

Another morning passed  
And nothing  
Packed my stuff and  
Went home.

Too scared to do it  
A sixth month passes by  
Why can't I just climb it?  
A stupid hill, more like a big mountain.

Next day  
I woke up and found a way  
To do it  
Not to look up.

Not to think  
About it  
Just go  
High above the sky.

It's the greatest thing  
I have ever seen  
I'm happy to be alive  
But wish to have another climb.

*— Tomorz Ternachi, Grade 12  
Wheeling High School  
Wheeling, Illinois*

*Illustrations accompanying "The Birthday"  
by Brian Hunter, Age 18, Hammond, Indiana*

## Finding Me

Gorged and tired,  
 I walked in disgrace.  
 Uncomfortable in my skin,  
 Uncomfortable in my life.  
 How I pined for skinny legs,  
 Skinny arms.  
 How I wished to be gazed at  
 By eyes of wanting.  
 Just to be beautiful by the opinions of others.  
 But my body would not shrink.  
 I grew tired of trying.  
 My thoughts were focused on the ugliness,  
 The anger.  
 Why did I have to stuff myself endlessly with food?  
 Slowly,  
 I stopped thinking about others.  
 Slowly,  
 I started to realize,  
 To see.  
 I had to look at myself, in my soul,  
 Discovering my true problems,  
 My addiction eating away at me.  
 By finding my affliction, I could begin the cure.  
 I had to be strong,  
 I had to be honest.  
 I'm still fighting my body,  
 Trying to shed the heavy set of skin,  
 But I am no longer uncomfortable.  
 I am happy by the person who stares back at me in the mirror.  
 I am beautiful again.

— Megan Volz, Grade 12  
 Papillion, Nebraska



Illustration by Jackie Fink, Age 15  
 Whiting, Indiana

## Winter

Sugar snow  
 Mingling with the aftertaste of maple syrup  
 On my tongue

Clean snow  
 Falling softly from pristine winter clouds  
 In a pastel sky

How can something so cold  
 Warm me so inside?

— Tegan Blackwood, Age 13  
 Carthage, Missouri





*Illustration by Elisia Wells, Grade 4, University Elementary, Bloomington, Indiana*



## INDEX TO GRAPHICS

	Page		Page		Page
Chavez, Nicola	87	Kitagawa, Aya	29, 31-32	Salatiello, L.	36
Clendening, Hannah	86	Koblesky, Norah	15	VanKooten, C.	97
Diehl, Amanda	83	Lee, Hanbit	89	Wallace, Rebecca	30, 31-32
Fidler, Mailyn	31-32	Lynch, Kelsey	31-32	Wallace, Zachary	31-32
Fink, Jackie	84-85, 98, 102	Matulewicz, A.	22, 81	Wells, Elisia	103
Gaebler, Harry	101	McLees, David	6	Wheeler, Gerald	55, 64-65
Holzman, Patti	57	Michniewicz, C.	46-47	Wilson, Dennis	29, 31-32
Hunter, Brian	4, 6, 20, 54	Morrow, Emily	29, 31-32	Wilson, Julia	28, 31-32
Jones, Amanda	19	Nowicki, R.	21		
Kingsley	33, 66	Roy, Taylor	88		

## INDEX TO EDUCATION

Agnew, Timothy	17	Hogan, Mary	13	McClellan, Jane	16
Bellessis, M.	28	Hunter, Pamela	7	McDonald, Walt	21
Catlin, Alan	20, 22	Jules, Jacqueline	21	Michniewicz, C.	26
Farmer, Rod	21	Kaffel, Meredith	11	Splan, Erin	14
Getchell, Mary	20	King, Nancy	23	Taksa, Mark	26
Germond, Alec	27	Knight, John	20	Walker, Britney	14
Godbey, Terry	19, 26	Malito, Giovanni	19	Wellingham-Jones, P.	19
Heller, Janet	23	Manes, Jeff	24	Williams, Phyllicia	14

## INDEX TO POETRY & PROSE

Bacevicius, R.	70	Gutierrez, Jesus	71	Rickard, Jack	36
Bailey, Jan	74	Healy, T. R.	67	Roberts, Peter	55
Bellows, Tim	34	Hillebrand, Robert	46	Ruben, Laura	71
Beyer, William	75	Holzman, Patti	78	Rypma, Judi	79
Binder, Kimbal	70	Katz, Dovid	39	Sain, Cynequa	Back Cover
Breit, Phyllis	79	Kelley, Ward	48	Scott, Nancy	66
Britt, Alan	37, 78	Kennedy, Joanne	54	Smith, Jennifer	66, 77
Burbank, Claudia	55, 64	King, Nancy	46	Smith, Michael	65
Catalano, Mike	47	Longas, Maria	70	Solonche, J. R.	75
Ching, Sharon	80	Malito, Giovanni	53	Stokkink, Joanne	56, 79
Coleman, Earl	46, 49	Manes, Jeff	47, 78	Suarez, Virgil	63
Cooke, Robert	35, 71	Mathews, Lauren	55	Susoreny, G.	64
Eaton, Charles	35	McCann, Kathleen	47, 65	Tinkham, Charles	38, 45, 70
Fitzgerald, Neil	35, 56	McKernan, John	75	Tyrrell, Nan	59
Flaherty, Doug	74	Michniewicz, C.	35	Vance, Bob	60
Fowler, Sandra	33, 53, 54, 74	Moritz, Shirley	76	Victor, Gary	64
Glaser, Michael	78	Murray, Andrea	54	Wasserman, Martin	72
Goldsmith, Sandra	53, 59, 80	Napolin, David	79	Wellingham-Jones, P.	56
Gott, George	75	Perry, Darrell	80	White, Henry	71
Grey, John	48	Redmond, Ronda	80	Zipper, Gerald	65

## INDEX TO YOUNG WRITERS

Allister, Betsy	84, 89	Lawson, Kirsty	89	Ternachi, T.	101
Blackwood, T.	102	Lerner, Randy	87	Tiernan, Ashlee	85
Coriell, Courtney	91	Lipovskaya, M.	84	Volz, Megan	102
Duralde, Elena	89	Luke, Joshua	86	Von Culin, K.	86
Gibson, Maggie	92	Melton, Kyle	94	Wedell, Eleanor	88
Hunter, Brad Lee	87	Shirrell, Ben	96	Williams, Kendra	98
Jones, Carson	95	Splan, Erin	98	Zimmerman, Chloe	99
Kierys, Jadwiga	87	Sumner, Nicole	93		



## **beloved**

my mind is your resting place  
as you lie there  
easy,  
between thoughts of  
heaven & iridescent spectrums.  
my love,  
beauty breathes through you  
beside you  
for you. . . .  
harboring distinct emotion,  
i am entranced  
moved to sing hymns  
acappella  
imagining the melody  
of an aged organ  
in the shadows  
of our temple.  
such is our romance  
a black rose  
in full bloom;  
an endless end  
to a timeless  
love story.

— *Cynequa Sain*  
*Gary, Indiana*

